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Writing and transformation in college composition.

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WRITING AND TRANSFORMATION IN COLLEGE COMPOSITION

A Dissertation Presented

by

MICHELLE LYNNE PARANTO

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Language, Literacy and Culture

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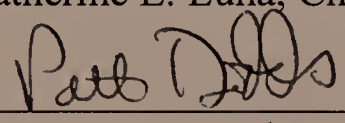

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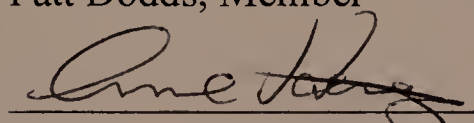

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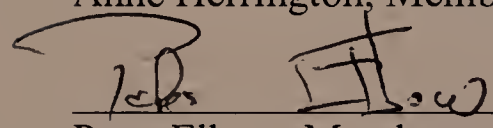

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DEDICATION

To the students in New Hampshire who taught me about hope and

to the participants in this dissertation without whom it would not be.

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Lastly, thank you to the many classes of students who I taught through this process for helping me to keep my faith in the possibility of writing for transformation.

ABSTRACT

WRITING AND TRANSFORMATION IN COLLEGE COMPOSITION

MAY 2005

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This dissertation is based on an interview study of twelve participants who had been students in various sections of College Writing taught by the researcher. This study focuses on participant descriptions of the writing they did in the class and its transformative impact on them. Based on the literature that claims that writing can transform and heal writers, this study seeks to understand how university students make sense of the ways in which writing makes personal and social change possible.

I conducted two, ninety-minute individual interviews with each participant. I also collected complete College Writing portfolios from each participant. Data coding and analysis were ongoing and guided by a feminist poststructural perspective. Through recursive analytic induction, I coded transcribed interviews and student texts for references to writing and transformation. I looked for individual and shared stories, metaphors and discourses that participants used to construct their writing experience in College Writing. The identified sections of the data that referenced writing and transformation underwent discourse analysis. To conduct discourse analysis, I coded the data for the social, cultural and institutional discourses students drew on to shape their understanding of writing and transformation.

Findings of the study include: 1) Students draw on multiple and complex discourses to define transformative writing. 2) Students identify multiple literacy practices as transformative. 3) Relationships within the classroom play an integral role in writing for transformation. 4) Feminist poststructuralist discourse can offer students the space to write for transformation. 5) Writing for transformation may offer resistance to the silencing of dominant discourses.

This study suggests that for these students writing is a sociocultural practice deeply imbedded in their sense of self and their constructs of knowledge and power. This study also suggests that writing in a classroom that creates the space for students to connect their subjective experience and knowledge with academic literacy practices is transformative. This study argues feminist poststructuralist discourse can offer teachers and students subject positions of resistance and agency so students may enter academic discourse communities as speaking subjects and teachers may work toward a more transformative educational practice.

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I need to believe that social change is possible and, further, that the possibility of shifting discursive positions and articulating positive representations of oneself is a more effective, more inclusive, and lasting form of political resistance than either silence or violence.
- Linda Brodkey

Background of the Study

Transformation fascinates me. I have been intrigued by change, the possibility of change, since I can remember. I spent my childhood moving at a rapid pace: Utah, New Hampshire, Indiana, Maine, Rhode Island and back to New Hampshire. Taking up new positions in new communities, new schools and new neighborhoods became a way of life. I was aware of continually changing as did the landscape around me. I learned at an early age to adapt and fit into new places. I also learned how to be comfortable with standing out because I was most often the new person in a classroom or in a group of people. I am a European-American woman born into a working-class family. My grandparents were dairy farmers and textile mill workers. My parents were the first in their families to attend college. I witnessed both of my parents attain undergraduate and graduate degrees. As their level of education increased throughout my childhood, we became identified with the middle-class. My parents placed great importance on literacy practices because they believed in the power of education to transform and enhance our lives. They handed that belief to me.

I have also been writing for as long as I can remember. Writing and reading have been a central part of my identity since I was old enough to hold a book. As a young child, my mother and father read to me and through that reading created an entire world

in my imagination. That imagination has carried me throughout my life by giving me the gift of creativity and the ability to escape and invent realities. It has helped me to think outside of traditional paradigms and to envision the world in which I would like to live. My imagination has helped me to believe in possibilities other than those that prevail. It has also given life to the fiction and poetry that I write for pleasure and solace. Part of why I write has to do with creating a space in language for what I imagine, and I believe that one of the reasons writing can transform writers has to do with this space. Different ways of thinking, being and living have to be imagined before they can become manifest.

Because I so loved the books my parents read to me and understood that people created them, I desired to write more than anything. This desire brought writing to me. My home literacy practices led to my success with school literacy practices. I learned to use my early literacy to excel in school. I also learned to hide the violence and alcoholism in my family from the outside world. These two practices taught me to both connect the personal to the academic through writing and reading and to disconnect the personal from the public because of the shame I carried about my family. I learned to be silent about what happened in my home. From an early age, I used reading and writing to escape and create worlds of my own design. I read as many books as I could get my hands on and wrote poetry and journals that I kept hidden in a box in my bedroom. I used my literacy skills to create a place in school where I could feel successful and powerful. My continued love of writing brought me to college. It carried me to graduate school, and it got me my first job teaching college composition. As a teacher, I witnessed students using writing to change their lives as I had been doing since I was a child. Outside of the college composition classroom, I designed writing groups for survivors of

violence aimed at personal and political transformation. I also continued to use writing in my own life to struggle through the consequences of the violence in my childhood.

While many of my early literacy practices were about joy and discovery, writing has also been about healing and survival. Through writing journals and poetry, I have made sense of the violence in my life and found a way to integrate my past into who I am and am becoming. I have found my strongest voice through writing and use it as the medium for my creativity and passionate self. Writing has also been the capital that has allowed me to enter academic discourses that I believe would have been denied me otherwise due to class and gender oppression. Writing has brought me into academic communities and given me membership and a sense of belonging to a larger group of people who find connection and joy through written words. It has also allowed me to commune with myself when I have felt like an outsider or needed written words to make sense of my life. I understand viscerally the power of writing and its ability to transform and heal because I have used writing for those purposes in my life.

My personal experiences with writing and teaching writing have led me to believe that writing can change writers and the world around us. I believe that we have the ability to heal and transform ourselves and, in that healing and transformation, create a space from which to work toward a more just and equitable world. I also believe that personal transformation is social transformation because I see the personal and the social as inextricable. Like most feminists, I also believe the personal is political. I ground my teaching and research in these beliefs. The connections I make between the personal, the social and the political inform my practice of teaching writing and the research for this dissertation.

The only times I have brought the personal into my academic writing as a student have been when teachers encouraged me to do so. I found this writing to be the most educational and liberatory as I wrote to learn about myself and the issues that shaped my social world. I found through this writing that my words and ideas meant something and could impact those who read them. This writing helped me to feel important in academic and social contexts that often left me feeling extraneous. I also believe that as I wrote about the events in my life and what mattered to me, I came to see myself as having agency. The words I wrote changed how I felt and thought and acted. Because of this, I started to believe in my ability to transform myself and the world around me. I want to be the kind of teacher that encourages her students to connect the personal, the academic, the social and the political through their writing, so they may know their potential power to enact change in their lives and beyond. I want to understand more about how writing can enact personal and social transformation. It is with these desires that I designed the research for this dissertation.

Teaching and Researching in Hope of Change

In September 1996, I accepted a job teaching at a school in a rural New Hampshire town. The principle knew my work with violence intervention programs and offered me a position working with students who were struggling to stay in school. The New Hampshire school was unique for several reasons. One, the school was located in one building which housed kindergarten through twelfth grade. I was to work with all of the age groups served by the school. Two, the school was situated in the poorest town in New Hampshire. Students who attended the school came from families who for generations had been working-class and living in or near poverty. They considered work

to be of the highest priority, not school. Three, seventy-five percent of the students left school before they graduated. The school itself was also struggling to survive in many ways including passing the state mandates for accreditation. I knew that these factors would make my position challenging as well as rewarding; adversity often creates a dynamic learning environment.

Three months into the year, five eighth grade students were assigned to me as their primary teacher because they could not or would not remain in the traditional classroom. They were hostile to their teachers, not doing their schoolwork and truant. I worked with these five students for five periods a day for the rest of the school year. We worked through the same material as the other eighth graders but in a smaller group. They took the same tests and wrote the same papers which were assessed by the teachers in the traditional classrooms. Each student continued to struggle with school but because they were accountable to me and to the group of five, they began to invest themselves in school. We spent a part of each day dealing with the life experiences that interfered with their learning because each student seemed to want and need a space to articulate what happened to them outside of school. Not having that space in the traditional classroom left their experience silent and seemed to prevent them from being able to focus on learning. The articulation of their experiences outside of the classroom became a part of our curriculum. The students understood that the space of my classroom welcomed the stories of their lives: even the ones that were painful or had been silenced by others. I was invested as a teacher in creating classroom discursive practices that articulated representations of these students as subjects (Brodkey, 1996). I decided the best way to

do this was by opening the classroom to their language and culture, to the stories about their families, their histories and their desires.

For these five students the year brought moments of joy and creativity. They were more connected to the school than they had ever been and were experiencing academic success for the first time. They recognized that they could learn and do well in school when they had believed that they could not. For example, they would express astonishment at learning math they had failed the previous year or writing an essay exam that received high praise from the teacher who had expelled them from her classroom. They came to school five days a week: sober and with their homework done. Their grades went up. They came to school prepared to learn and engage in literacy practices; they were eager to be there. The school year also brought moments of violence, pain and grief. Outside of school, the students continued to use drugs and alcohol at levels that frightened me. One student was in a near fatal car accident because he was drunk and driving a stolen car. Two students attempted suicide. One student became actively anorexic and bulimic and miscarried twice. As the year went on, I became aware of how little the support I could offer them at school seemed to impact the larger contexts of their lives. The administration at the school worked with me and with the students to keep them in school, but some of the students' decisions left the school no choice but to suspend them at various times throughout the year.

Amidst all of the students' personal struggles, the school was also in turmoil. As part of the accreditation process, the school decided to change the way that my classroom functioned. It was to become a detention center the following year because the administration felt that the school needed a space designed to be more punitive. I knew I

could not be the facilitator of a room designed for student punishment, so I decided to leave the school in June at the end of the academic year. At the end of the year, all five of the students with whom I had been working passed the eighth grade and were admitted to the high school. I promised them that I would be at their high school graduation as long as they were there as well.

In April 2001, two of the students called from one of their houses to tell me they would graduate that June. They asked if I would be there, and I said I would. I learned that of the five with whom I worked these two were the ones who had made it to graduation. I attended graduation and understood as I talked with them afterward what it took for them to get to this point; it had been a constant battle in and out of school with teachers, parents, work and relationships. Neither of them knew what they were going to do next, but they were happy to have graduated. I asked about the other students who had been part of the group of five. Two of them left school after the eighth grade. One lived at home with her parents. The other was pregnant with her third child and living in a local apartment. The third had come back the following year and left halfway through ninth grade. He was working at a local restaurant. I agreed to call him the following week. Two days later, he was killed in a single car accident. He was drunk and went off the road and into a tree. That week in June the only thing I could think about was how profoundly social, communal, familial and educational institutions had failed these five students.

The teaching and the learning with the students in New Hampshire forced me to question the role of education in American society. I knew when I started teaching at the school that some students were better served than others. When I left the school a year

later, I better understood how oppression worked against students and teachers in their quest to learn and to teach. Working with the students at that school brought me to questions about curriculum and the role of schools in the lives of students. While I was at the school, I asked myself daily what a curriculum would look like that addressed and met the needs of the students with whom I worked. I felt that an effective curriculum would need to intersect the personal with the academic because for these students the institutional denial of their experience prevented them from learning in school. They needed the time and space to tell their stories and to share them with others in an environment that responded with compassion and respect. Once they had done this, most often they could then turn their focus to things like algebra, Hawthorne and sentence construction.

The consistent articulation of their experience also brought them to questions about the contexts which shaped that experience. For example, as they shared stories about substance abuse they came to see that they each lived with violence and oppression which brought them to using drugs and alcohol to escape. Through putting words to their experience and sharing those words with others, they recognized the connection between their experience and their substance abuse which seemed to allow them to stop blaming themselves as much as individuals and released them from some of the emotions which caused them to use drugs and alcohol. They never stopped using in the short time we spent together, but they used less and seemed better able to make decisions about their drug and alcohol consumption like being sober at school. They appeared to shift from believing themselves to be inherently flawed as addicts to seeing their addiction as one of the consequences of the violence and oppression with which they lived. They also came

to see the pattern of addiction in their families and communities and its relationship to violence and oppression. By connecting the personal to the academic, we created a context that allowed them to also connect their personal experience to the social and the political. What would it look like to teach the "personal as an embodied social and political act" (Kamler, 2001, p. 183) through the curriculum that we offer students in schools? Because I teach writing the most, my questions about curriculum led to questions about teaching writing. Can writing in classrooms offer students the possibility to change their lives, especially when those lives are steeped in generations of poverty, violence and oppression?

When I left the school in New Hampshire, I knew that I wanted to better understand the systemic intersection between oppression and education. I also left with the belief that schools have a responsibility to address the needs of their students even when those needs go beyond reading and writing; schools have a role to play in students' lives as they struggle to live them free from oppression. The teaching I did in New Hampshire taught me that bringing the personal to classroom literacy practices is essential if education is to be relevant and transformative for students, which I believe all education must be if we are to call it education. I define the personal as the experience, emotions and desires of each individual who enters a classroom, and, as a teacher, I believe we must welcome the personal in the classroom if we desire any kind of change. Since teaching at the school in New Hampshire, I have continued to pursue my interest in transformative language practices in educational institutions. That interest has become more sharply focused on writing practices. I have found that the practice of writing in a

classroom can offer students across educational settings the potential for personal and political transformation.

In an ethnographic study I conducted at an adult literacy program from September 1999 to February 2001, I found that the adult learners who participated in the study used the space of their writing group to construct stories about experiences of violence: experiences that had most often prevented them from completing their secondary education. The process of writing and sharing these stories created a community that allowed for the writers to end the silence that surrounded their experience which seemed to open the space for them to articulate and pursue their educational goals. The breaking of silence that occurred when the adult learners wrote their stories and then shared them transformed the classroom into a site constructed by their language practices that embraced their lived experience. Similar to the students in New Hampshire, these adult learners found the process of writing their stories and speaking their lived experience to be educationally liberating. They also used their classroom experiences of taking up new subject positions to enact change in their lives outside of the educational setting.

For example, one student wrote about the ways in which society did not acknowledge her as a person with physical and mental disabilities. She wrote several essays, poems and letters about inadequate accommodations and being silenced and ignored by case workers, doctors, psychologists and society as a whole. Previously, she had written letters to her City Hall requesting that they put an auditory signal at their major intersection for blind people so that they knew when to cross the street. She wrote letter after letter until they finally installed the signal she asked for at their intersection. When I met her, she was organizing a conference to raise awareness about the ways in

which the state system labels people. She had been labeled mentally-retarded since childhood and wanted that label to change. Her participation in the adult literacy program increased her literacy skills and cultivated her sense of self so that she was able to work toward the changes she desired in her life.

Currently, I teach college composition. I continue to read student essays about domestic violence, drug addiction and bodily trauma except these are written by university students. I also continue to read about the connection between oppression and education through student essays about their experiences with reading and writing. I remember the five students from the rural New Hampshire school and the adult learners from the literacy program, and I connect them to the university students to whom I now teach writing. When I speak of my teaching and research, many people will comment that poor people or adult learners need writing that focuses on healing and personal transformation. The dominant discourses that construct poverty and illiteracy as individual deficits create a context where those labeled as poor and illiterate *need* to change. It strikes people as commonsense that writing to heal and transform would be good for *them*. It is also culturally understood that trauma survivors are working to heal and bring their experiences into the mainstream. Books have been written. Talk shows and news programs have publicly addressed issues from domestic violence to incest to date rape. There are resource centers and crisis intervention programs in the smallest of towns. The dominant culture has taken up the discourses of healing and transformation and made them commonplace. In American culture, we are well aware that many people experience violence and oppression and have stories to tell about those experiences.

However, for many people, teachers included, schools are not the site to address personal experiences, especially those of bodily violence and oppression. Traditional academic discourse demands that we separate the private and the public. But as Moffett (1994) states,

> we get good at something as part of getting well and realizing our deepest being. I know the university feels it shouldn't play doctor or priest, dirty its hands with therapy and its mind with religion. But if it has real live students on its hands, its hands are already dirty…Unhealed wounds and undeveloped souls will thwart the smartest curriculum. (p. 261)

University writing curricula owe students access to discursive practices that offer them representations of themselves as subjects and "texts of personal experience as discursively produced and therefore changeable" (Kamler, 2001, p. 36). University students deserve the opportunity to write about what matters to them including the opportunity to write about experiences that challenge the traditional educational borders between the personal and the academic. Writing for healing and transformation is not only for those who live culturally marginalized lives as defined by dominant discourses. It offers *any* writer an opportunity to use language to construct reality, to shift subject positions and to change themselves and the world around them. Bringing personal experience into the classroom as an authoritative source of knowledge is transformational for many students (Anderson & MacCurdy, 2001; Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1986; Herrington & Curtis, 2000; Kamler, 2001; Payne, 2000b). Schools can offer sites of resistance for any student by welcoming the personal and encouraging its critical examination; writing classrooms may best serve this purpose through their focus on language and its transformative possibilities.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to better understand the perspectives of students on writing and transformation in College Writing. I have taught writing in multiple contexts for ten years. I have worked with writers in formal and informal settings: junior high and high school classrooms, colleges and universities, adult literacy programs and support groups for domestic and sexual violence survivors. In each setting, I have been most interested in and compelled by those writers who used their writing practices to enact change in their lives. I retain "the faith that many of us retain in language – to put things right" (Brodkey, 1992, p. 302). I continue to cultivate the belief that writing and writing communities offer a way to heal and transform the social conditions that create oppression and the violence it makes possible. I also believe that writing can transform our sense of self and our ideological place in the world. In an exploration of these beliefs, this dissertation study looks at how university students took up a first year writing curriculum for transformative purposes and focuses on the perspectives of these students and their understanding of the connection between writing and transformation.

I chose to study writing for healing and transformation with university students, a subject position most often constructed as privileged, because I wanted to challenge the dominant discourses that culturally construct oppressed people as in need of healing and transformation and people in positions of privilege as not. I also chose to study with university students because I imagine teaching in a college composition classroom for many more years. I conducted this research to help me better understand how to teach college composition in more transformative and more meaningful ways for more students. I wanted to better understand how change happens for students and the role that

writing may play in this change. I wanted to learn more about how to teach writing to university students that goes beyond college composition as a required course that students need to complete to fulfill a general education requirement and moves toward teaching college composition as an opportunity for students to write in ways that matter to them and may change how they understand themselves and their place in the world.

Through this study I gained a deeper understanding of writing and transformation. I learned about how twelve students define transformation and its relationship to writing. I know more about the discursive practices these university students identified as transformative in their first year writing course. The knowledge gained from these students has helped me to better understand how writing curricula may offer students the space to interrupt oppressive discourses and enact personal and political transformation. Writing this dissertation transformed what I see and hear when I work with students in the writing classroom, how I understand my role as a teacher and the way in which I teach college composition. This study more firmly grounded me in my beliefs about writing and transformation. It also forced me to question my values, beliefs and teaching practices in unexpected ways.

Significance of the Study

The conversation about the connection between language and transformation is ancient (Entralgo, 1970; Johnson, 2000) and continues today among those interested in the possibility of language enacting change. Doctors and scientists have brought this conversation into the practice of Western medicine by researching the healing properties of language. Some doctors have begun to conduct research on prayer as a way to heal (Dossey, 1993). Medical scientists investigate the effects of language on the brain and

the power of words to make people healthier (Brand, 2000). Medical studies suggest that writing can help alleviate the symptoms of physical illnesses like asthma and arthritis (Smyth, Stone, Hurewitz & Kaell, 1999). Current medical and scientific research challenges modern Western beliefs about the separation between the mind and the body by showing that language and expression remain invaluable to healing (Pennebaker, 1997). Many contemporary psychologists use writing for healing and transformation and poetry as therapy (Kelley, 1990; Longo, 2002), and some teachers have taken up psychotherapeutic discourses as part of their writing pedagogies (Berman, 2001; Harris, 2003). Adult literacy practitioners also use writing to help trauma survivors heal from experiences of violence (Horsman, 1999).

The conversation about writing and transformation entered the field of composition with the shift from a cognitive definition of writing as a set of skills to a definition of writing as a process. During the late 1960's to the early 1970's, writing teachers began to rebel against the institutional practice of teaching writing through memorization of rules, drills and correction of errors. They advocated for teaching writing as a process that involved the active participation of students. Valuing the emotive, intuitive and the imaginative, these writing teachers saw writing as a way of knowing, as a way to empower students and create a connection between writers and readers that fostered empathy (Gradin, 1995). Writing became an act of "radical individualism" as a critique of the ideology of corporate capitalism and the elitism and bureaucracy of higher education (Berlin, 1988; Gradin, 1995). Teachers began to use collaborative learning, journal writing, multiple drafting and self-reflection in the classroom. Voice became an important component of writing well and with purpose

(Elbow, 1973; Murray, 1969). With the shift toward teaching writing as a process, writers in many classrooms were given the opportunity to create knowledge, explore their experience and their emotions and look at their relationship to the social world (Gradin, 1995). The belief that language could transform the self and the world around that self took hold in the practice of teaching writing.

Today many teachers, theorists, scientists and psychologists continue to question and investigate the relationship between writing and transformation. Much of this conversation centers on shifting definitions of the self. Those who resist the possibility of writing to transform the self most often assert that the practice of writing for transformation rests on the assumption of a unified, coherent self whose existence they deny (Johnson, 2000). On the other hand, those who believe that writing can transform claim that the practice involves coming to understand that reality and the self are fluid (Anderson & MacCurdy, 2000; Johnson, 2000; Richardson, 1990; Rico, 1991). The ongoing debate about writing for healing and transformation has been concerned primarily with the self and its individual and social boundaries.

There is a great concern about the maintenance of such boundaries in our educational institutions. Claiming to protect students, many in our colleges and universities argue that writing in the classroom should focus only on traditional academic literacy and enforce the divide between public and private (Pfeiffer, 1993; Swartzlander, Pace & Stamler, 1993). They worry about the dangers presented to students in a classroom where the writing curriculum offers the chance to write outside of academic conventions. They fear teachers acting as therapists. They fear students being pushed into emotional places they are not equipped to negotiate through their writing.

Specifically, Swartzlander, Pace and Stamler (1993) question if personal writing positions female students as vulnerable to male professors. They also state that male students may have difficulty with personal writing in a culture that disavows men's expression of emotion. Lastly, they question the positioning of students who are already feeling "out of place" because of their racial, ethnic and/or class background because personal writing may "expose" them in ways with which they are not comfortable or may make them more vulnerable to discrimination. While each of these concerns are valid, rather than prohibit personal narrative in the classroom, proponents of transformative writing argue for offering the curricular space for students to make their own decisions about the kinds of writing they do.

There has been significant theory building and research done on the transformative potential of writing in college and university classrooms (Allen, 2000; Anderson, Holt & McGady, 2000; Deletiner, 1992; Murphy, 1989; Newkirk, 1997). Researchers have approached this topic from very distinct paradigms ranging from the scientific and cognitive (Brand, 2000; Pennebaker, 1997) to the psychological (Brand, 1980; Carter, 1994; DeSalvo, 1999; Herman, 1997) and the sociocultural (Anderson & MacCurdy, 2000; Coles, 1989; Heilbrun, 1988; Horsman, 1999). My study most closely aligns with the qualitative, the sociocultural and the poststructural studies focused on the writing practices of college and university students and the implications of those practices on writer identity and composition pedagogy (Blitz & Hurlbert, 1998; Herrington & Curtis, 2000; Ivanic, 1998; Kamler, 2001; Lee, 2000, Payne, 2000b).

In their study, Blitz and Hurlbert (1998) described and reflected on the writing of their students through a series of letters exchanged between the two authors as well as

between students involved in an interstate writing project. Through these letters, Blitz and Hurlbert question the practice of teaching writing and challenge teachers to open the writing classroom to the stories students need to tell about their lives. Blitz and Hurlbert found the stories students wrote for their composition class to be the most important writing students did and argue that the writing of these stories may work against the violence and oppression in the world. Herrington and Curtis (2000) followed four university students through their undergraduate education and analyzed the writing they did across courses and its impact on their identities. They found these students wrote to construct coherent selves and a sense of community that could understand and identify with them. Herrington and Curtis advocate for writing curricula and classroom practices that begin with the students and their positions as writers and as people.

Ivanic (1998) studied the writing practices of "mature-age" university students and the academic writing identities they negotiated in their courses. Through ethnographic research, Ivanic demonstrates "the capacity of written language to construct the identity of the writer" (p. 343). She argues for placing writer identity on the agenda in theory and practice to challenge institutions to recognize writing as a sociopolitical act and to offer writers greater access to the kinds of changes writing can make possible. Kamler (2001) argued in *Relocating the Personal* for politicizing the teaching of writing across educational settings. Drawing on poststructural concepts of transformation and self, Kamler brings together four teaching case studies. She analyzes student texts and classroom interactions and asserts the importance of a critical writing pedagogy that relocates the personal in story as a way to enact change through writing.

Through studying the basic and first year writing courses she taught, Lee (2000) provides "a reflexive, critical portfolio of one teacher's (ongoing) process of coming to a specific version of critical pedagogy in the teaching of writing" (p. 5). Analyzing student texts, conversations from the classroom and current scholarship on composition and critical pedagogy, Lee argues for a "pedagogy of revision" and claims that teaching writing is a political activity with "important possibilities for effecting change both within and beyond our classrooms" (p. 21). She argues for revision as the only reason worth teaching because it allows teachers and students "to see ourselves, authority, meaning and texts as ongoing processes of construction" (p. 21).

Payne (2000b) examined the writing of university students who wrote about bodily violence (experiences of physical or sexual violence or experiences with an eating disorder) in their composition courses. Using a case study approach, Payne presents student essays and analyzes them through the lenses of literature and current theory and research on bodily violence. Through text analysis and student interviews, Payne argues that student essays on bodily violence have a place in the composition classroom and that teachers need to listen to what these stories have to tell and take them as seriously as they do all other student essays. Each of these studies offers valuable insight into the writing practices of university and college students and their implications for writing and transformation in the classroom.

This dissertation study shares much with these previous studies on the writing practices of college and university students. Like these studies, this study gathers together data from several sources to include student texts and interviews and uses contemporary theory and research on writing as a lens. This study also concurs with

many of the findings of the previous studies: writing in the classroom can change students, and it has an important role to play in education. This study advocates for teaching in ways that make writing transformative for more students. Having read the previous studies, I designed this study in an attempt to go deeper into the discourses students draw on to make sense of their writing practices by asking more direct research questions about the connection between writing and transformation and focusing the study on interviews with students. I wanted to hear students make meaning of the writing they did in the classroom: what it changed for them, how it did so and why. I also chose to study one curriculum and to move away from a case study approach in the belief that this would help me to investigate the possibility of multiple students identifying the same aspects of the curriculum as transformative.

Of the studies that teachers designed to specifically research the connection between writing, transformation and healing (Berman, 2001; Payne, 2000b), this study does not focus on students who wrote only autobiography or only about bodily violence. This study looks at student writing across a range of genres and topics. This study also adds to the qualitative research that has been conducted on writing in the university classroom by combining a feminist poststructural perspective with discourse analysis of student texts, hopefully offering a new perspective on the connection between writing and transformation in college composition. In many ways, the conversation about what kinds of writing belong in the composition classroom consists of teachers and researchers arguing for different agendas from the critical to the socio-epistemic from the Marxist to the social-expressivist to the psychoanalytic (Bartholomae, 1995; Berlin, 1987; Bizzell, 1991; Ebert, 1996; Gradin, 1995; Harris, 2003). I hope that this dissertation brings more

student voices to this conversation. I also hope that this research contributes to the larger conversation about the possibilities of using language for healing and transformation.

I have participated in many discussions with teachers about college composition and its purpose at the university. While most teachers believe that college composition plays an important role in the education of university students, they tend to disagree about aspects of the curriculum. I have worked with teachers who believe college composition should just teach the conventions of writing academic texts. I have worked with teachers who believe that the course should stress a critical perspective and develop the critical consciousness of students. I have also worked with teachers who teach college composition as a creative writing course. Of the many conversations I have had with these various kinds of teachers, the most passionate have been about crossing the border between the personal and the academic. As teachers, we struggled with our roles and our personal boundaries and questioned what our jobs really entailed: how much of teaching writing had to do with relationships with students that went beyond their essays? We struggled when students wanted to get too close or tell us what we felt was too much of their personal lives, and many of us seemed to feel particularly troubled when students wrote about experiences of bodily violence. We constructed curriculum that tried to mark the boundaries between the personal and the academic so students would know where we stood and how much they should reveal about themselves.

I always argued for the inclusion of the personal and its importance to learning to write well and taught from this perspective by inviting students to bring their lives into the classroom. At the beginning of this study, I believed that this aspect of my curriculum contributed to creating a context that allowed students to write in

transformative ways. I also knew that writing about the personal seemed a very political act as many students used this writing to learn new ways of thinking and to resist dominant discourses on their experience. I knew that the kinds of writing students did in my classroom that seemed to change them the most began with the personal: their experience, ideas, emotions and desires. I did not know if students would agree with my interpretation of their writing practices. I did not know why writing the personal appeared so transformative for so many students. I did not know why students would take the risks they did in the College Writing classroom necessary to write what changed them, and I wanted to know how to make this possible for more students. This study contributes to the conversation about the inclusion of the personal in the college composition classroom and its connection to writing for transformation. I hope that this study also challenges teachers to think about *how* and *why* they teach college composition and the possibilities the course holds for enacting personal and political change.

Interchapter 1: Autobiographies by AnnMarie, Dan and Tina

Growing Pains by AnnMarie

The last six years my life has been dedicated to cheerleading. I truly ate, slept and breathed cheering. It meant everything to me, it was my sport and I put everything I had into it. Everything I did was for cheering. I worked out during my off season. I worked out extra in the gym after practice. I called my teammates to practice on days off and during the off season. I was completely dedicated. I not only wanted to be as good as I could be but more than anything I wanted my team to be its best. At practice I always was extremely focused and expected others to be just as focused. I constantly told the others to stay on track, pay attention, and top complaining. My motto was "just do it." I

never complained and I always put 110% of myself into everything I did, and so I expected everyone else to. In cheerleading I loved trying new and difficult tricks. I loved the challenge of it and the frustration, sweat, tears and blood that went into achieving it. I worked extremely hard and never let anything stop me from what I wanted to achieve. I never let anyone tell me I couldn't do something or that something was beyond me. Once I put my mind to it I worked at it until I got it. I have always been an extremely hard working, dedicated, focused athlete that never let anything stand in the way of her goals.

On August 2, 2001, I was seriously injured in cheerleading practice. I fractured my thallous bone, a bone in the front of your ankle. Along with the fracture I had also disrupted the blood supply to my bone, turning my injury into a life changing experience. The doctors told my parents and me that my injury could either heal fine or have some pretty serious complications, but either way it would take up to a year to know whether or not my bone was healing, right or wrong. Upon learning that I could not bear any weight on my ankle at all for up to 4 months, I was put in a wheelchair. This all happened exactly one month before I was supposed to begin my first semester as a college freshman.

Throughout the month of August I had many doctor appointments and basically spent the entire month lying on my couch on all sorts of painkillers. But then the time came that I was supposed to be leaving to start my life in college. Due to the seriousness of my injury my parents urged me to stay home and take my first semester off to heal and get myself healthy. But after all I had gone through I was both physically and emotionally hurt; in the last month I had learned I didn't know when I was going to walk

again and I might never get to go back to cheering, my passion in life. I knew the only way to heal was to go to school. My parents, friends and family all felt that I should stay home and get better and not try to go away to school because it would be too difficult for me, that there would be too many obstacles, but I didn't see it that way. I knew going away to school would be extremely difficult and challenging but I also know I could do it. I had to prove to my parents, my doctors and even more to myself that this injury wouldn't stop me from living my life.

I made the decision to go to school, to start my whole new life, three and a half hours from home, and "handicap." Once I made the decision I had to deal with many challenges. First, being on such a big campus, how would I get to all of my classes, how would I eat in the dining hall if I couldn't carry my own tray, how would I shower, where would I live and who would help me do everyday things that were now impossible for me to do on my own, like walk across the room to turn on a light or hold things like a glass or books? I went to school despite these challenges.

For most of the beginning of my first semester I stayed in my room because going out to a party was a dangerous and scary situation for me. My mom also came up to school and stayed in a nearby hotel for a week to see how I would adjust. I did it. I got myself up every morning and showered and dressed, I got my books together and went outside to meet my ride to class. I was lucky enough to have a roommate go with me to the dining hall to help me and I got myself where I needed to be. I went to class when it rained or snowed despite the pain and difficulty of getting around in a wet environment. But after being at school for a few weeks I realized that I couldn't get used to not being a part of anything; not going out and not being a part of a team, not having friends all

around. I missed walking to classes and meeting new friends. I had tried going to cheerleading practices to see the team and still feel like a part of it but being there was extremely difficult. Sitting there watching them practice new stunts and tumbling passes hurt me so much that I didn't want to be anywhere around the sport. I didn't want to watch the team practice; I didn't want to see them perform at games or on TV because all it did was remind me that I didn't know when or even if I could ever do it again.

Losing my passion in life tore me apart emotionally. I didn't know what to do with myself. All those years I had dedicated my life to cheerleading and now there was nothing I could do to stay a part of it. I longed for the sisterly bond I had with my teammates and the fun sleepovers we had. I missed not being able to go to practice and forget about everything going on in my life to just have my best friends around me while doing my favorite sport. I missed the tough practices and the screaming coach. I missed being part of a team and so I tried to find all that in joining another team. So I joined the crew team. I got up every morning at 4:30 and went to the river where I sat in a boat and steered while calling commands out to the guys rowing.

In joining crew I made lots of friends and despite being hurt I was getting out and living my life without being able to walk. But by being on the crew team I didn't get the things out of it that I was hoping to. It didn't satisfy me at all. Emotionally I only felt worse. Being a part of another team made me realize even more how much I missed cheerleading and being a part of that team. Joining the crew team for me was my way of trying to replace what I was missing from not being able to cheer. But in crew I did not find a team in which I felt a bond like that in cheerleading, where you feel like your teammates are your family. It did not offer the same feeling of forgetting everything in

your life to just concentrate on doing something that you truly loved. I didn't get that competitive edge or the high from competing at such an intense level that I did when I cheered. There seemed to be no emotional connection with the team. I did not feel that I was willing to make sacrifices or dedicate all of myself to becoming the best I could at it. Crew did not spark the passion within me that cheerleading did.

Crew made me see just how much cheerleading meant to me. It was from this experience that I learned, no matter what happens with my ankle, whether it heals right or not, whether I will be able to cheer again or not, I want to always be a part of cheerleading. I knew I could no longer separate myself from the sport just because I was hurt. Even though it hurts to watch, it's what I love, what I know, and I want to still be a part of it.

Though I am not yet healed and still dealing with crutches, I have made it through six months of constant challenges. I have done it all without complaining or losing my focus, just like in cheerleading. At this point as I look back at the last six months I see how much I overcame and dealt with and I can truly say I am most proud of my accomplishments over the last few months. I never took the time to look back over things I have done in my life in school, cheerleading or anything else. But now that I have I can say this has been my biggest challenge and no matter what happens over the next six months I know I won't let any of it hold me back from what I want in life.

The Death of My Grammy by Dan

"Grammy died."

"Who died?" I replied, shocked. I could not believe what my father had just told me. I did not want to believe it. It was like time had stopped; everything around me was

zoned out by doubting ears. He could not have meant Grammy, right? No, not Grammy. She was young and fit. She was my grandmother. No, not her. She was still alive and well: out for a jog around her assisted living neighborhood, playing cards in the common building or out grocery shopping. She was immortal. There was no such thing to me as death of a close family member.

My mind played tricks on me, making me think of anyone by my grandmother. I though of my great aunt Anita, who had Alzheimer's disease. I thought of my other great aunt Emma who, as far as I knew, was in perfect health. I tried to think of other older female relatives on my father's side of the family. Terribly, I would have preferred the death of one of the women of which I was thinking. In response to my already contested question, I asked my father again who had died. "Who?"

"Grammy. She had a heart attack."

I knew, just then, the truth. My grandmother had died of a heart attack earlier that day.

At this point, my father and I were in the driver's seat and passenger seat, respectively, in his van. We were returning home from baseball practice a half an hour from my house. My three good friends were in the backseat of the van, witnessing the whole incident. The rest of the car ride went on in silence.

Upon arriving home, my father proceeded to tell me all that his brother had told him on the phone. Grammy woke up, got dressed, and made herself toast. According to the coroner, she probably felt a little nauseous before going to the bathroom. She died in the bathroom. The latter fact added to the inconceivability of the entire incident. I would

never have imagined my Grammy dying, never mind the fact that it was in the bathroom. It all seemed wrong to me.

I did not cry when my grandmother died. I regret it now. It was an awful feeling, like I didn't care enough about her to cry. I truly hope that that was not the reason that I didn't cry. I want to believe that it was because I was a young big-shot, trying to keep face in front of my peers or family. I know that deep inside I felt remorse, as I do now.

She was always a very youthful woman, and she did not want to be remembered as an old person. In her will, she stated that if she were to die in her old age, she wanted to be cremated. She had always told her sons that she always wanted to be young and shapely. The night after her death, my father came into my room and he said, "Grammy always wanted to stay young. I guess she got what she wanted." This was the only time I cried over her death, because I saw how truly sad my father was.

The wake was open-casket, but she was cremated for the funeral. I do not have a clear distinction between the wake and the funeral in my memory, but I do remember being in a receiving line. People would come and console me, my siblings, and my cousins, before moving on to my parents, my uncles, and my grandfather. I remember the distinct scent of formaldehyde that couldn't be masked by the endless bouquets of irises. My uncles were very emotional, but my grandfather, although divorced from my grandmother since the early '70s, was one of the most emotional people in the line. It showed the love that he still had for her, even after a second marriage. The remnants of her once happy little family were left in tears.

What I remember best about my Grammy are the cookies she used to make. They would produce a familiar aroma that made her house smell like a bakery. Depending on

the type of cookie, one could expect crispy, dark sugar cookies with a sliced almond on top or chewy, crumbly gingerbread men with raison buttons and an almond face. Whenever we went to her house, she would have a fresh batch of her Swedish cookies on the counter waiting for our consumption. She was also an excellent cook. Having been married to a full Italian, she learned to make lasagna and other pasta dishes very well. In addition to her Italian dishes, she had repertoire of ethnic Swedish dishes that she had learned to make in her youth. I loved visiting her.

Another vivid memory I have of times with Grammy is when I used to go to sleep over her house when I was about five years old. She used to read a book to me called The Three Little Kittens Who Lost Their Mittens. I would cry whenever I saw the kittens on the black and white pages, and Grammy would console me. When their mommy told them that they couldn't have any jam if they didn't find their mittens, I cried even more. The book would end the same way every time: the kittens found their mittens and get to eat jam. I was so happy that the kittens got their jam that I wanted jam too. It was a tradition for Grammy to make me a toast and strawberry jam sandwich. I can still feel the cold stainless steel as I licked the jam off of the knife. These moments were some of the most innocent indulgences of my youth.

Christmas was not the same the year she died. My uncle's house felt empty, although it was still full. She was on everyone's mind, but nobody wanted to acknowledge the obvious absence. I could tell that, while she was still alive, she loved seeing her children and grandchildren participating in the same holiday rituals as the ones in which she had partaken with her children thirty years earlier.

I wish that I could have had the chance to ask her about life on a more mature level, now that I have grown up. Just one hour with her would make me happy and allow me to fully accept her death. All the time I realize that I miss her more than anything. I have a different outlook on living and dying. I think her death caused a major epiphany in my life. I realize now that life does not always go the way one may want it to go. Things happen in life that people have no control over, things that cannot be taken back. I have realized that the reality of life is sad but true, and you have to deal with things as they happen and go on with life. The death of my grandmother has enabled me to look at life from a different perspective than before. I have gained a respect for the dead and their mourners. I also feel a new appreciation toward my parents and other people close to me because I know now that they could be gone within the blink of an eye.

Who Would Have Known by Tina

Looking back my childhood was filled with happiness and laughter. I loved my parents to death and they were the ones I looked up to. I thought they were my super heroes. I can remember how I wanted to grow up and be successful just like my father and a loving parent like my mother. There was no such thing as a bad day. My childhood was carefree and filled with no responsibilities. However, as of right now, all there is are responsibilities and stress. I cannot escape from them as hard as I try. Getting accepted to the university helped me escape a little part in life I tried running away from. There are still some distractions from home that still make me worry but now I mostly have to worry about school and receiving good grades.

My mother has chronic fatigue syndrome. It is an incurable disease and it makes you really tired and irritable. She was put on heavy medication to help her get some

energy and to help her with her depression. She became addicted to those medications so being in a tight place and her having no job led her to take out her anger on us. At first I wasn't aware of this. I thought my mother was a psycho, not literally, but it sure seemed like it for the most part. Her illness is what made our family grow apart.

About two months ago we started to sell our house and when we finally did all hell broke loose. My mother became distant and my father would come home later and my siblings would stay as far away as they could. I was stuck in the middle. I had nowhere to go. When we were packing things to move into the apartment my mother became more verbal than ever. To her it seemed like my whole family was doing something wrong. We tried helping her out but she would just snap at us. Then finally when we got into the apartment my mother quieted down. I thought that would be the end of it but apparently it wasn't. It was just the start of the roller coaster.

My senior year was starting and I thought it would be all fun and games. I was wrong. The first couple of months were good except for filling out college applications but that was the least of my worries. I had to juggle being on the swim team, National Honor Society, student council, yearbook and my classes. But that wasn't my real problem either. My real problem was my mother. She and I became really distant and we wouldn't even want to be in the same room as each other. I couldn't stand being her daughter. As hard as that sounds, it isn't that mean. She put me through a lot. How is someone supposed to deal with being told they are a failure and they will not be able to succeed in life? I took on more responsibilities than I should have, such as the responsibility of being a second mother to my sister and brother.

The first clear incident that actually changed me was in the winter. My Mom had stopped taking her medication because she said it was not doing her any good so she threw it all out. So for her treatment she would go to an acupuncturist and take herbal medications. She said doing this would cure her illness. This I still don't understand. I think it was just a placebo effect on my mother and she gets angry when I tell her this.

When she got back from her acupuncture treatments in Boston, she started accusing my father of all these nonsense actions. All she would do is yell at him and put him down. In return, my father would just sit there and take it but he would also try to calm her down. However, anything he would say would be wrong and my mother had to be right. It hurts when you hear your parents screaming at each other and especially accusing each other of something they did not do. This went on for a couple of months. I thought nothing of this sort would ever happen. We were supposed to be that perfect family with a little flaw because everyone has a flaw.

Then sometime in December my mother told me to call 911 and ask for an ambulance because she could not speak correctly and she could not dial the numbers. She was crying so hard that she started to tremble. She told us that she had to be taken away from this hellhole. This is the scariest memory ever. I left before the ambulance came but as I was driving away I could hear them coming. I had to leave because my sister and brother needed to be somewhere. I did not see my mother for a few days. My father went to the hospital with her but they could not do anything to help her. So she became angry and yelled at all the doctors. I did not really hear what actually happened that night.

Then one day in February my father just walked out on us. I was in total shock. He said that he couldn't take it anymore and that enough was enough. He didn't say goodbye. At that point everything went down the drain for me. I started to cry and my Dad was also crying when he was packing his stuff up. Fathers aren't supposed to cry. How were we supposed to live in the same house as my mother when my father, the tough macho guy, couldn't take it anymore? He called us from time to time but it was just hard hearing his voice. My mother didn't even care that he had left. She was happy about it, but I could also see in her eyes that she was also hurt.

Just a little while after my father walked out, my sister was kicked out of the house because she talked back to my mother. My mother threw most of my sister's things into the road and told her to find somewhere to live. Again I was in total shock. As much as I didn't talk to my sister I was crying because I didn't want her to go. I loved her even though I didn't show it. My sister was also crying and she isn't a person who cries. How could my Mom do such a thing like this? The only good thing that came from that night was that my Dad was able to pick my sister up and bring her to my grandparents. My brother and I had to always please my mother and stay as far away from her as possible. Things were not the same anymore. It made my senior year a living hell.

It took a long time for things to turn around and when I thought they did they really didn't. My father came back and so did my sister, but the aura around the house was odd and awkward. My mother started to lose some weight and she became even weaker. There were some points where she would just sleep for a couple of days. That's when my view turned around. I couldn't stand seeing my mother in that state of

complete helplessness. It made me so sad. I started to feel bad about what I'd said to her so I tried helping with the family. My sister and brother would have no part in doing this so it was left up to me.

Then one time in spring I received a phone call in chemistry class. My mother called the school telling them that I had to leave so I left and drove back home. When I got there I saw my Mom lying practically paralyzed on the bed with no expression on her pale face. Walking in the door and seeing someone like that almost made me breakdown into tears. I had to help her get changed into clothes, help her eat some food and carry her off the bed and into the car and drive her to the doctor. It broke my heart to actually see someone in that much pain. So many things raced through my mind.

My mother never told my father about that incident because she did not really want him to be a part of her life anymore. My grandparents did not like the idea of this and fought with my mother and told her that she was being verbally abusive and that she was not right in doing what she did. So my mother and grandparents stopped talking. Because of the fight between my Mom and my grandparents, my parents decided to see a marriage counselor. They thought by going to this things would be able to work themselves out; however, having two different stories and two very stubborn minds, nothing was resolved. As of right now my parents are still together. However, they are still struggling with their marriage.

Being in my position, what is a teenage girl to do? I tried to help but it was not good enough to fix things. I could only lend a hand but not change anything. I wanted to get things back to normal, but it was so impossible. These events during my senior year made me the person I am today. I've been through having both my parents leave and

being stuck in the middle and seeing my family break up. I learned a lot going through those events. I learned that I was not responsible for any of this. I became a stronger person and I know to take trust to another level. I did not want this to happen to me, but it has to happen to someone.

I am a person who wants to help someone. I want to be a doctor and help people out. I don't even care for a thank you, but just seeing a smile on someone's face will make the job worth doing. I am even stronger than before because witnessing the fights and having to deal with listening to my Mom complain and talking to my father for support, one learns to be strong. Having no one to turn to, I learned to do things for myself and learned how to deal with things on my own. When my parents left, I could not always count on someone being there for me. It hurts because sometimes it seems that they do not love me anymore and that it is my fault that all of this happened. This is not the case, but I cannot help but to think this way.

I am not as close to my parents as I was when I was younger. In a way, some children might like this, but truthfully, I think I want to be closer to my parents. I want to be able to talk to them and have no shame in asking them a question. Maybe later on in life that will happen, but as of right now that is out of the question. I really wish I didn't have to go through this. I've gained strength and independence, but I've also lost my ability to trust people. It will take time to actually put this in the past and move on.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

Introduction

Researching writing for transformation and healing has allowed me to better understand how other teachers, researchers and writers conceptualize the transformative potential of writing. Depending on the discipline of the writer, within the literature there exist many different theories about writing for transformation and healing. This literature review presents and discusses the contemporary sociocultural discourses that shape the practice, research and theory surrounding writing and transformation. The exploration of these discourses shaped my thinking about writing and transformation and provided the framework for this dissertation. Each discourse offers the possibility that writing can enact personal and social transformation. The differences between the discourses lie in their beliefs about the self and the potential and purposes of language. Each discourse offers possible answers as to what, how and why writing transforms.

I organized the literature review into four main sections according to the themes I saw present in the conversation among theorists, researchers and practitioners about the self, writing, healing and change. These sections divide the literature along theoretical lines according to the discourses theorists, researchers and practitioners draw on to construct and define writing for transformation. The first section looks at what I defined as emotivist discourse, the liberal humanist construction of the individual self and the concept of transformation as healing. The second section investigates the narrativist discourse about the power of story to construct a self and resist oppressive narratives through the creation of alternative stories that hold the potential of liberation. The third

section discusses the social constructivist discourse on the self as socially-constituted and the concept of transformation as the development of critical consciousness and the enactment of social change. The fourth section explores the poststructural construct of the discoursal self as well as the poststructural belief in transformation as discoursal change and the possibility of shifting subject positions.

The different discourses overlap each other in considerable ways. For example, some of the teachers, researchers and theorists who draw on narrativist discourse write about the connection between emotions and writing narratives by drawing on emotivist discourse; social constructivists and poststructuralists share a strong desire for the writing done in the classroom to affect the world outside of the classroom. All of the proponents of writing and transformation in the classroom invest themselves in breaking down the boundaries between the personal and the academic and the private and the public. They also share many of the same classroom practices like implementing writing workshops. The lines I drew between discourses in this literature review reflect the theoretical lines between those involved in the contemporary debate about writing and transformation. The lines are not impermeable. While some of the writers included in this literature review explicitly position themselves within a discourse, much of the discoursal construction of this literature review is of my design not of the writers I have positioned within the discourses.

Traditional Academic Discourse on Writing

Before I review the literature on writing and transformation, I need to first define the more traditional academic discourse on writing that the discourses on writing and transformation seem to resist and to which I will also refer within the dissertation.

Traditional academic discourse on writing draws on liberal humanist discourse and lives deep within American educational institutions. Premised on a belief in individuals to fail or succeed in school on their own merit, traditional academic discourse dictates much of the way teachers and students write within classrooms. This discourse on writing holds within itself the "mainstream, middle-class values of quiescence and placidity, values that will ensure no real demands for significant social change, nor any serious questions about power and status" (Gee, 1990, p. 31). As a discourse, it demands that teachers assign students to master the conventions of Standard American English, so they may succeed within academic institutions and attain a higher education. It also demands that students adhere to the writing rules prescribed by their teachers in the quest for good grades, grades connected to success within a capitalistic, patriarchal society (LeCourt, 2004).

Within traditional academic discourse, writing serves the purpose of marking a writer as good or bad, as capable or incapable of educational, economic and social success. The writing most privileged by this discourse stems from a Western, capitalistic patriarchal culture which separates the body from the mind and emotion from reason, therefore, honoring the illusion of objectivity and the analytical within texts. Because of its origins within this culture, traditional academic discourse on writing prohibits the use of the first person and the writing of subjective experience and emotions; it creates a divide between the academic and the personal (Herrington & Curtis 2000; Payne 2000b). While it appears to offer the promise of liberation, traditional academic discourse on writing denies the individual agency within and beyond language by silencing that which lies outside of the truths held up by dominant discourses on American culture.

Emotivist Discourse, the Individual and Healing

Recovering the poet strengthens the healer.
- Rachel Naomi Remen

American culture believes strongly in the individual. Many Americans view the individual as distinct and often separate from society: capable of making her own destiny, capable of failing and succeeding by his own skills and desire. This belief in the individual came with the groups that colonized America and is firmly grounded at this point in mainstream American cultural constructions of democracy and capitalism. The cultural myth at the root of this belief is essentially a version of self-actualization – the story of

> a confrontation of the American individual, the pure American self divorced from specific social circumstances, with the promise offered by the idea of America. This promise is the deeply romantic one that in the new land, untrammeled by history and social accident, a person will be able to achieve complete self-definition. (Baym, 1985, p. 71)

Within this discourse, the individual self is a coherent, stable and singular entity that exists deep inside of people. This concept of the individual self intoxicates as it promises agency. The individual makes her own choices and decides her own future; she is powerful and free inside of liberal humanist discourse.

By drawing on liberal humanist discourse, many teachers and writers construct a discourse of emotion by defining writing as healing because writing can offer individuals the space to connect to their emotions and experience. Emotivist discourse conceptualizes writing for transformation as the process of healing through self-discovery; personal writing can help discover, create and enhance a writer's sense of self. Those drawing on emotivist discourse often position themselves within a psychotherapeutic or medical model of healing where personal writing can directly

transform the psyche as well as the body (Pennebaker, 1997). Writing can be used to learn about and examine the self (Foehr, 2000; Pennebaker, 1997; Schneider, 1993). Writing can enhance self-concept and esteem (Brand, 1980) and facilitate identity development (Carter, 1994). Writing can also help achieve self-actualization, especially if it allows for an exploration of creative potential (Stamatelos & Mott, 1983). Emotivist discourse constructs writing as therapeutic. Writers can heal themselves by writing in a journal (DeSalvo, 1999; Mlynarczyk, 1998) or writing poetry (Fox, 1997). Writing helps

> people integrate the disparate, even fragmented parts of their life. Poetic essences of sound, metaphor, image, feeling and rhythm act as remedies that can elegantly strengthen our whole system – physical, mental and spiritual…poetry is a natural medicine. (Fox, 1997, p. 3)

The teachers, writers and researchers who draw on emotivist discourse view personal writing as one of the most healing and transformative acts language can offer writers. They open their classrooms to the expression of emotions and challenge the discourses that create boundaries between the emotional and the rational and the public and the private which delimit traditional academic institutions. Teachers draw directly on emotivist discourse by offering writing workshops that encourage personal expression and creative writing as part of the composition curriculum. In the writing classroom, emotivist discourse can be healing for students as they put their feelings into language. Rico (1991) calls this "naming and framing" and defines it as empowering when "we discover the enormous satisfaction that comes from putting our feelings onto the clean white page of healing" (p. xii). Through emotivist discourse, writing heals as a process of personal transformation grounded in the individual and emotion as integral to human experience.

Narrativist Discourse and the Power of Storying

I will tell you something about stories, they aren't just entertainment.
Don't be fooled. They are all we have, you see,
all we have to fight off illness and death.
- Leslie Marmon Silko

Narrativist discourse conceptualizes story as a way to create a coherent self through language. Narrativists believe that through stories, individuals learn how to belong and how to stand apart; they learn how to behave and how to revolt. Through stories, people can also construct their pasts, imagine their futures as well as create their present lives. While liberal humanist discourse constructs the self as a separate individual capable of healing, narrativist discourse conceptualizes the self as a social being capable of healing and social transformation through stories. Anderson and MacCurdy (2000) assert,

> healing is neither a return to some former state of perfection nor the discovery or restoration of some mythic autonomous self. Healing, as we understand it, is precisely the opposite. It is change from a singular self, frozen in time by a moment of unspeakable experience, to a more fluid, more narratively able, more socially integrated self. (p. 7)

For narrativists, storying offers people the space to connect to the social world around them as they write the stories of their lives. Writing these stories offers the possibility of transformation and healing, especially for those whose stories have been silenced.

Pennebaker (1997) recognized the transformative potential of stories while conducting medical experiments measuring the body's responses to writing about traumatic experiences. He states,

> people who benefited from writing were constructing stories. On the first day of writing, they would often tell about a traumatic episode that simply described an experience, often out of sequence and disorganized. But day-by-day, as they continued to write, the episode would take on shape as a coherent story with a clear beginning, middle, and end. (p. 103)

It was only those participants that constructed their story in writing that showed measurable health benefits after the study. According to Richardson (1990), "narrative is the best way to understand the human experience, because it is the way humans understand their own lives. It is the closest to the human experience and hence the least falsifying of that experience" (p. 65). For narrativists, writers come to story because they seek language to shape their experience. Rico (1991) uses the term "to story" to talk about the "universal human impulse-the human need to give form to feeling" (p. 100). As writers shape their stories through language, they can come to recognize themselves as always socially engaged in relationship. When personal storytelling is "taken as the unit of analysis and when it is examined as a set of situated practices, the narrated self emerges as a relational self" (Miller & Mehler, 1994, p. 47). Narrativist discourse offers storying as a way for writers to become healthier and more connected to themselves and others.

Narrativists often refer to the potential of story to contextualize emotion and shape experience, thereby, moving writers into the "larger, healing context of time and space" (Rico, 1991, p. 172). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) "imagine…that in the construction of narratives of experience, there is a reflexive relationship between living a life story, telling a life story, retelling a life story, and reliving a life story" (p. 71). They state that the retelling and the remaking of the past is inevitable and good and "to do so is the essence of growth and an element in the criteria for judging the value of experience" (p. 71). Narrativists conceptualize stories as a way to construct a safe space for reflection and connection between the past and the present (Rico, 1991).

For some researchers and practitioners drawing on cognitive and psychological discourses, narrative heals the individual by capturing images and allowing the individual to examine them and the self that can be trapped within them. According to MacCurdy (2000), the methods which produce good writing are the ones that bring about healing: the shift from voice-over narrative to iconic image. By using writing to describe and detail an experience, writers can heal through making conscious buried images that often trap people in the past. Hawkins (2000) also brings the concept of image to the discussion about writing and healing when she refers to the "indelible image" as an image that prevents people from ever moving beyond traumatic experience. The process of storying can shatter the indelible image by putting it into language and causing it to change. Once images change they no longer have the ability to keep people trapped because the images themselves are no longer static. Writing about these images also gives people a certain degree of control over them which causes the images to lose much of their power to shape the present and constrain the future.

As writers come to understand themselves and others through the individual stories they write and tell, they are also shaped by and shaping the larger cultural stories that give coherence and meaning to their experience as well as defining what that experience may be in a given context. "Within and through stories, we fashion our relationships with others, joining with them, separating from them, expressing in ways subtle and not so subtle our feelings about the people around us" (Dyson & Genishi, 1994, p. 3). As Bakhtin (1981) argued, the stories we tell place us in the sociocultural landscape. Cultural stories signal memberships in communities and allow writers to construct a self that "stands out and fits in" (Dyson & Genishi, 1994, p. 237). Richardson

(1990) asserts "participation in a culture includes participation in the narratives of that culture" (p. 25).

While stories offer the potential of expanding landscapes for their tellers, stories can also inhibit and control what can be told and, in turn, what can be lived. The construction of stories is not a natural, utopian discursive process. Some feminist poststructuralists have taken up the project of deconstructing narratives as a way to understand their cultural power (Gilbert, 1994; Walkerdine, 1990). According to Gilbert (1994),

> we do not know how to "tell" some stories – nor, sometimes do we know how to "hear" others – as many marginalized groups have discovered throughout history. We have no well-worn patterns to follow. How, for instance, were women to tell the stories of their lives as women, when so few stories existed for them to read? When so little narrative space existed within which such storytellers and such stories could be heard? Ways in which we might organize and transform a series of events into "a story" are dependent upon the cultural paradigms of possibility available to us; they are dependent upon the social understandings accessible at specific historical moments. (p. 130)

Cultural members learn how to "be" partly through the stories that they hear and participate in daily. Through cultural literacy practices, stories come to take on mythic proportions and may come to be understood as the matrix by which cultural members live their lives.

> Through continual layering of such stories, we learn how to participate in our culture. We learn appropriate ways to read and make sense of experience and we learn appropriate ways to talk and to write, although the "appropriate" ways may not always be satisfying. (Gilbert, 1994, p. 131)

Cultural stories call to the most basic desires because, as Walkerdine (1990) suggests, they connect with fantasies: with deeply held desires to be loved, to be wanted, to be cherished (Gilbert, 1994). The narratives which

> dominate as authorized and common sets of social meanings in Western culture do not support women (or men) in a full and varied development of their potential

> as social subjects. They obscure the richness of human diversity and the plurality of social subjectivity. They deny us dignity and value. (Gilbert, 1994, pp. 139-140)

However, narrativists assert that writers can construct collective stories that challenge and deconstruct cultural stories that maintain oppression.

Collective stories refer to co-constructed narratives by which a group may collectively come to define itself in a larger social context (e.g. the collective narratives constructed by women of color to counter racist and misogynistic cultural narratives). Collectively participating in writing narratives allows writers to understand stories as both true and partial by situating knowledge as historical, temporal, situated and subjective (Richardson, 1990). Due to their constructivist nature, collective stories, even while transgressive, will "unavoidably be a mix of the old and new" (Lensmire, 2000, p. 109). Writing collective stories moves writers toward being able to create alternatives to dominant cultural narratives. According to Lensmire (2000), "we need stories. And if we want to make ourselves and our worlds up differently, then we need different stories" (p. 109). While the collective human story subsumes all individual stories, at the same time, collective stories can give voice to those who may be silenced or marginalized by cultural narratives. The creation of new collective stories has the potential to overcome some of the isolation and alienation inherent to oppression by linking separate individuals into a shared consciousness (Florence, 2000; Julier, 2000; Nye, 2000). As Richardson (1990) states "once linked the possibility for social action on behalf of the collective is present and, therewith, the possibility for social transformation" (p. 26). Collective stories that deviate from standard cultural plots provide new narratives; new narratives can offer the patterns for new lives.

Social Constructivist Discourse, Critical Literacy and Social Change

There is no transformation without action.
- Paulo Freire

Social constructivist discourse views the self as constituted through language and the process of socialization; therefore, it focuses on how societies, communities and cultures mediate and determine language use and identity formation. Social constructivists critique the liberal humanist concept of the self as romantic and argue for a more complex and shifting sense of self (Newkirk, 1997). Within social constructivist discourse, the individual and the social are not considered mutually exclusive categories but interdependent, dialectically connected and co-defined (Gannett, 1992). Constructivists see the relationship between language, knowledge and power as central to the construction of the self. "Thus, a critical theme…is that language not only conveys social reality, but is also one of the prime elements in its construction and maintenance" (Gannett, 1992, p. 4). Critical social constructivists have a social justice agenda and recognize the power of language to oppress and to liberate. Due to this agenda and their beliefs about language and knowledge, critical literacy operates as the primary means by which social constructivists use writing to change the world.

Social constructivists place questions about the constitutive nature of the self at the center of the classroom. Relationships between writers and texts are understood as reciprocal and dynamic because "the practices of writers and readers are seen as social and thereby material enactments of their collective as well as individual understanding of what can and cannot be done in writing" (Brodkey, 1987, p. vii). For social constructivists, the community provides the forum for literacy. "Reading and writing take place in the context of historical and current communities of other readers and

writers who share essential, although often invisible, literacy habits, conventions and discursive models" (Gannett, 1992, p. 7). Many social constructivists believe a goal of education should be cultural evaluation and political consciousness. Social constructivists often invite personal narrative into the classroom as a place to begin social critique and understand and utilize personal writing as a means to social action (Benson, Christian, Goswami & Gooch, 2002; Heller, 1997).

Among social constructivists, critical literacy practitioners and theorists emphasize the transformative potential of reading and writing and focus on literacies as practices that take place within particular social and political contexts. They view illiteracy as a symptom of poverty and oppression rather than as a cause for poverty and oppression. Implementing critical literacy practices in the classroom allows teachers and students to explore the origins of oppression through examining the language practices of students (Barton, 1994; Freire, 1997; Shor & Pari, 1999). Critical literacy is a political practice where all literacies are understood as ideological (i.e. embedded in values, beliefs, assumptions and practices). "Literacies are indices of the dynamics of power" and the goal of critical literacy is "to understand and practice reading and writing in ways that enhance the quest for democratic emancipation, for empowerment of the subordinated, the marginalized Other" (Lankshear & McLaren, 1993, p. xviii). In Shor and Pari (1999), Shor states,

> we are what we say and do. The ways we speak and are spoken to help shape us into the people we become. Through speech and other actions, we build ourselves in a world that is building us. We can remake ourselves and society, if we choose, through dissident projects. This is where critical literacy begins – words that question a world not yet finished or humane. (p. 1)

He goes on to define critical literacy as pedagogy "for those who wish to act against the violence of imposed hierarchy, restrictedness, and forced hunger" (p. 7). He asks "how

have we been shaped by the words we use and encounter? How can we use and teach oppositional discourse so as to remake ourselves and our culture?" (p. 1).

As social constructivists, many critical literacy practitioners take the work of Freire as the foundation for their writing pedagogy. "Freire believed the transformation of thought to text requires the conscious consideration of one's social context. Often students unaware of the connections between their own lives and society personalize their problems" (Fiore & Elsasser, 1987, p. 89). Critical literacy practitioners focus on Freire's idea of generative themes as a way to encourage students to understand the impact of society on their lives. Students and teachers use personal narrative in the classroom as a way to gather generative themes. By "investigating issues such as work or family life from an individual and a sociohistorical perspective, students bring their own knowledge into the classroom and broaden their sense of social context" (Fiore & Elsasser, 1987, p. 89). According to Fiore and Elsasser (1987), Freire stated,

> students caught by their own subjectivity can break through personal walls and move to a collective social perspective through investigating generative themes. Such themes must be selected carefully so that they encourage students to write for a broader, more public audience and empower them to use writing to change their lives. (p. 92)

Historically, according to Ohmann (1976), universities institutionalized composition to produce people acceptable to the dominant social order. Colleges and universities often position compositionists to teach students the genres and conventions deemed appropriate for writing in academic settings as a way to indoctrinate them into traditional academic literacy. Critical literacy practitioners challenge traditional composition pedagogy. They posit that the role of the writing teacher is to disrupt and dismantle the process whereby writing becomes a means to maintain oppressive language practices by limiting what can be written and spoken inside of classroom walls. Shor and

Pari (1999) offer the writing class as a site for critical literacy – a space to propose social and personal alternatives to the status quo. Critical literacy as writing pedagogy makes clear the connection between language, knowledge and power and defines knowledge as a social construction based in ideology. Critical literacy functions as a pedagogical tool to help students develop a critical relationship to their own knowledge and writing practices (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985). Critical literacy offers writing pedagogy for seeing the self as socially-constructed as well as critically-responsible for the social world.

Similar to critical literacy practitioners, feminist social constructivists also have a social justice agenda in the classroom. While they employ critical literacy pedagogy, feminist social constructivists turn their focus to issues of gender and the body. They name the public/private split that permeates educational settings as a patriarchal construction (Gannett, 1992). Feminists looking at the socially-constructed nature of the classroom see writing for transformation as challenging the public/private dichotomy that structures most educational institutions. According to Gannett (1992), "when we see students discovering the healing and restorative function of language, we try to exclude, deny, or trivialize" these practices in our schools (p. 204). Most schools often deny students the right to express their emotions and bring their experience to their academic literacy practices. Feminist social constructivists specifically address this denial and its implications for students who have experienced violence and oppression. These students are most silenced in the classroom because their experiences are most silenced in the sociocultural contexts that shape educational institutions. By refusing personal narrative in the classroom, traditional educational institutions often deny oppression that is marked

on bodies and experienced through emotions. Research shows that students know that language can heal and liberate (Anderson & MacCurdy, 2000; Blitz & Hurlbert, 1998; Carter, 1994; Heller, 1997; Payne, 2000b). According to feminist social constructivists, the denial of that use of language in the classroom is an educational injustice.

> We have been trained to make the common misguided assumption that therapeutic writing, writing to heal, is unrelated to writing to know and that it has no place in the academy…writing to heal and writing to know, to become a self capable of knowing, are necessarily correlated. (Gannett, 1992, p.192)

Many social constructivists have conducted studies looking at the transformative possibilities of writing in classrooms (Fiore & Elsasser, 1987; Heller, 1994; Rice, 2002; Torruellas, Benmayor, Goris, & Juarbe, 1991). By welcoming personal narrative, a social constructivist classroom offers students the opportunity to write about what matters to them. It also offers them a transformational community in which to critically examine their personal narratives. In a social constructivist classroom, students write to develop critical consciousness and to become aware of how society has shaped them: to learn they have the power to shape their social worlds and to transform oppression and social injustice.

Poststructuralist Discourse, Subjectification and Agency

Has not the practice of revolutionary discourse and scientific discourse over the past two hundred years freed you from this idea that words are wind, an external whisper, a beating of wings?
-Michel Foucault

Poststructuralist discourse defines the self as discoursal, which differs greatly from the emotivist, narrativist and social constructivist sense of self. Poststructuralists position the self as embedded in historically-, socially- and culturally-situated discourses. Central to a poststructuralist sense of self are the terms subject and subjectivity.

> These terms signify a crucial break with humanist, binary conceptions of the individual…Unlike the term "individual," the term "subject" encourages us to think of ourselves and our realities as constructions: the products of signifying or meaning-making activities which are both culturally specific and generally unconscious. The term "subject" calls into question the notion of a totally conscious self. (Orner, 1992, pp. 78-79)

Poststructuralism rejects universal truths and the unitary rationalist subject which liberal humanists position as foundational to all knowledge. Poststructuralists focus on the historical structures of sociocultural institutions within which the individual has been constructed and, importantly, on the language with which the individual and the social have been written (Luke & Gore, 1992).

One of the primary goals of poststructuralism is to become conscious of differing voices in differing discursive situations. In this, poststructuralist theory differs fundamentally from a social constructivist perspective. Social constructivists focus on narrative accounts primarily as the way to learn about the social world and the details of that world as it is experienced by the participants. Davies (1993) differentiates poststructuralism from a social constructivist perspective as the difference between the concepts of socialization and subjectification. She states,

> subjectivity is generally not made problematic in constructivist accounts, and the liberal humanist version of the unitary rational actor is kept intact. It is assumed that the rational account of their social worlds is *the* account of that world. Poststructuralism, in contrast, seeks to understand the processes through which the person is subjected to, and constituted by, structure and discourse…Poststructuralist theory argues that people are not *socialized* into the social world, but that they go through a process of *subjectification*. In socialization theory, the focus is on the process of shaping the individual that is undertaken by others. In poststructuralist theory, the focus is on the way each person actively takes up the discourses through which they and others speak/write the world into existence *as if they were their own*. Through those discourses they are made speaking subjects at the same time as they are subjected to the constitutive force of those discourses. (p. 13)

Because of the way poststructuralists conceptualize subjectification and the importance of discourse, language is crucial to poststructuralist theory.

Poststructuralists see language not as a tool but "as a site of struggle where subjectivity and consciousness are produced" (Orner, 1992, p. 80). As Weedon (1987) describes,

> language is not transparent as in humanist discourse, it is not expressive and does not label a "real" world. Meanings do not exist prior to their articulation in language and language is not an abstract system, but always socially and historically located in discourses. Discourses represent political interests and in consequence are constantly vying for status and power. (p. 41)

According to poststructuralists, discourse achieves meaning only in "the concrete forms of social and institutional practices" (Macdonell, 1986, p. 12). The poststructuralist use of the term discourse signals an understanding of the person as made subject through the discourses they have available to them. People draw on an "array of discourses through which [they] constitute themselves and are constituted, to which [they] may or may not make commitments, and yet which will have a powerful constitutive force in [their] lives" (Davies, 1993, p. 14). Through the concepts of subjectification, language and discourse, meaning becomes situational and relational as people construct knowledge in their given contexts through relationships of power (Clifford, 1991).

Poststructuralist theory looks closely at the relationships among identity, power and knowledge. Interested in the harm done by master-narratives, poststructuralists investigate the ways institutional structures are constructed and controlled (Luke & Gore, 1992). According to Davies (1993),

> a poststructuralist analysis does not invent a new structure to replace the old, but provides insights into the discursive mechanisms which hold existing structures in place. Those insights allow a different relationship to structure, a recognition of it as something which is not absolute, which can be acted upon by individuals and collectivities. While its constitutive power must be recognized, the possibility

> that it can also be laughed out of existence, played with, disrupted, or used to manufacture new possibilities, can also be recognized. (p. 198)

Poststructuralists use writing not only to deconstruct master-narratives but also to construct alternative discourses which can offer writers the possibility of new subject positions. Along with the deconstruction of master-narratives, poststructuralists borrow several themes from postmodernism: subjects who write are also written; all discursive signs are unstable and institutionally specific; and truth is negotiated only within the conventions of various disciplinary discourses at specific historical moments (Clifford, 1991).

While postmodernists invest themselves in the deconstruction of the modernist world, poststructuralists concern themselves with language as a means to agency. Poststructuralism puts writers and readers in concrete social situations and pays particular attention to how race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, nationality and material interests shape reasoning, argument and purposes for writing (Clifford, 1991). Within a poststructuralist framework, writing enables transformation by making agency possible for the writer. Davies (1993) offers a poststructuralist definition of agency as a combination of

- the ability to recognize the constitutive power of discourse;
- the ability to catch discourse/structure/practice in the act of shaping desire, perception and knowledge; and
- engagement in a collective process of re-naming, re-writing, re-positioning oneself in relation to coercive structures. (p. 199)

It is through this process of re-naming, re-writing and re-positioning that writers can shift their discursive position and possibly transform themselves and their social worlds.

Similar to emotivists, narrativists and social constructivists, poststructuralists recognize the concept and practice of writing for transformation as complicating the

simple binaries that structure traditional educational institutions: the academic/personal, political/solipsistic, self/other and postmodern/romantic (Anderson, Holt & McGady, 2000; Davies, 1993; Payne, 2000a, 2000b). However, poststructuralists addressing the transformative potential of writing focus directly on the concept of discursive trauma and problematize the construct of the body as it writes itself into classrooms and schools. For poststructuralist feminists in particular, "texts, classrooms, and identities are read as discursive inscriptions on material bodies/subjectivities" (Luke & Gore, 1992, p. 4). According to Luke and Gore (1992), feminist poststructuralism differs from postmodernist theory by grounding itself in a "politics of embodied identities, differences, and historical locations" (p. 5). For feminist poststructuralists, the "historical contingency of feminine subjectivity is central…and therefore the refusal of identity is not part of the feminist theoretical or political project" as it can be with postmodernists (Luke & Gore, 1992, pp. 5-6). Claiming the body as a locus of knowledge production and emotions as an epistemology, feminists construct a poststructuralism that speaks directly to the project of writing for personal and social transformation. Through the feminist poststructuralist lens, writers can have a body and lived experience as well as coming to understand the discoursal nature of them both. For feminist poststructuralists, the self is not the completely coherent individual of liberal humanist rhetoric nor is it the dissolved selves of postmodern discourse.

Feminist poststructuralists bring subjective knowledge into the writing classroom as a valid and valued way of knowing. Teachers who critique the practice of personal writing in the classroom often assume that valuing the "personal voice" and self-reflection is an uncritical, nonsocial stance toward discourse. They imagine personal

writing as affirming dominant ideologies and emphasizing the discovery of a romantic, humanist self through writing in an "authentic voice" for teachers whose job is to affirm these positions of privilege (Payne, 2000a). This argument constructs the personal and the emotional in the philosophical terms of modern Western ideology. Within this paradigm, emotion becomes defined as "an internal, bodily, socially unmediated response to an individual experience that is unstable, irrational and easily exploitable by those who have mastered reason" (Payne, 2000a, p. 119). Emotions appear to be critically untouchable entities that remain unchallenged. Yet as Jaggar (1989) states, "critical reflection on emotion is not a self-indulgent substitute for political analysis and political action. It is itself a kind of political theory and political practice, indispensable for an adequate social theory and social transformation" (p. 164). For many writers, emotions are a way to critical reflection and social action. By opening the space in writing classrooms for textual representations of the body and emotions, feminist poststructuralists have created a pedagogy that connects the personal to the political by emphasizing their discoursal construction (Lee, 2000; Payne, 2000b).

Along with emotivists, narrativists and social constructivists, poststructuralists support the use of personal narrative in the classroom "to express the intense particularity of one's own experience in words that both express and remove the isolation" (Davies, 1993, p. 177). Davies (1993) describes personal narrative as a telling which moves writers and their experience from "the specific to the cultural, since in the act of speaking/writing it, the experience becomes that which everyone knows, that which anyone else can then begin to speak" (Davies, 1993, p. 177). Emphasizing the discoursal construction of identity, Davies (1993) asserts,

> until we have invented new storylines, new discourses, we are still enmeshed in the old. And even when we invent the new, the old can still claim us, draw us in with their familiarity and the hooks of our old and current unsatisfied desires…Any attempts to disrupt old cultural patterns and to invent new ones must deal simultaneously and in a multi-faceted way with individual psyches, with social structures and patterns and with the discursive practices with which those psyches and those structures are constituted. (pp. 197-198)

Poststructuralists welcome the writing of individual stories as the beginning place for "a recognition and understanding of *what is*, an acknowledgement of the way in which what is, is taken up as one's own [and] learned through the body, linked to personal experience and confronts the unconscious" (Davies, 1993, p. 200). Poststructuralists view the writing of personal narrative as the struggle to define a self as well as a struggle for power and access to language.

While poststructuralists embrace the practice of bringing emotions and personal narrative into the classroom, they disrupt many of the discursive practices associated with process pedagogy. Herzberg (1991) argues,

> a poststructural commitment to critical consciousness means combining critical reflection with writing practice…If, with Foucault, we reject the theory that language is the servant of knowledge in favor of the theory that discourse constitutes knowledge and its powers, we may be able to reconstitute our composition courses under the rubric of a new rhetoric. (p. 81)

Poststructuralists implement writing workshops in the classroom, but question the traditional assumptions and aspirations of these workshops. Teachers who implement process pedagogy have an "intense and genuine desire to break down the barriers between teacher and student, between distant, academic discourse and personally meaningful writing" (Jarratt, 1991, p. 109). Poststructuralists share this desire to deconstruct the barriers of the writing classroom; however, given the political implications of the contemporary classroom, they view process pedagogy as problematic with its focus on the individual. Jarratt (1991) states,

> the transformative potential of [process] pedagogy has to be evaluated in the light of broader political implications in theory…The complexities of social differentiation and inequity in late-twentieth-century capitalist society are thrown into the shadows by the bright spotlight focused on the individual. (p. 109)

Drawing on process pedagogy, poststructuralists use writing workshops as a space for students to deconstruct their identities and bring awareness to their discoursal construction.

Process pedagogy constructs the ideal writing workshop as a space where all participants can openly share their stories. Poststructuralists argue that it is impossible for there to be anything like a genuine sharing of voice in the classroom. A poststructuralist writing workshop attempts to "recognize the power differentials present and to understand how they impinge upon what is sayable and doable in that specific context" by centering on issues of subjectivity and representation in texts (Orner, 1992, p. 81). Poststructuralists also problematize the discourses on student voice in process pedagogy which rest on the assumption of a fully conscious, fully speaking, unique, fixed and coherent self. "These discourses, enmeshed in humanist presuppositions, ignore the shifting identities, unconscious processes, pleasures and desires not only of students, but of teachers, administrators and researchers as well" (Belsey, 1980, p. 132). Poststructuralists posit that individuals must be thought of as "unfixed, unsatisfied…not a unity, not autonomous, but a process, perpetually in construction, perpetually contradictory, perpetually open to change" (Belsey, 1980, p. 132). Poststructuralist theories of language see authentic student voice as an impossibility since subjects and language are never fixed, never "true or authentic." Poststructuralist teachers also use writing workshops to examine teacher privilege and authority and to de-center

themselves and the traditional practices of enforcing writing conventions and standards (Clifford, 1991; Davies, 1993).

Teachers in a poststructuralist writing classroom hope to bring students to an awareness of the discoursal construction of their identities and their social worlds so they may understand that writing is an act of power that positions them among other writers. As Ivanic (1998) states,

> writing is not a neutral "skill," but a socio-political act of identification in which people are constructed by the discoursal resources on which they are drawing, construct their own "discoursal identity" in relation to their immediate social context, and contribute to constructing a new configuration of discoursal resources for the future. (p. 345)

Within a poststructuralist classroom, teachers and students become researchers of their own language practices, cultures and institutions (Ivanic, 1998). "Through such a collective endeavor, students may find composition not a distressing trial of the self but a stimulating exploration of global forces" (Schilb, 1991, p. 188). Through this research, the boundaries between classrooms, schools and communities surface as discoursal constructions. To investigate and challenge these boundaries, poststructuralist teachers bring texts into the classroom to historically and culturally situate students and their experiences. In a poststructuralist writing classroom, there are no textbooks. The classroom texts consist of student writing and outside texts chosen by both teachers and students (Schilb, 1991).

> Instead of being informed by an authoritative text, or of deciding whether or not they like a text, or whether or not the text is "realistic" (bears any relation to the world as they understand it), critical/deconstructive writing…enables [students] to see the text as shaping them and shaping worlds in ways that have previously been invisible to them…It involves finding a way to make the shaping process visible, to "catch the text in the act" of shaping. This requires a complex cognitive shift away from an apprehension of the text as transparently revealing a real world. (Davies, 1993, p. 63)

To further disrupt the writing classroom, poststructuralists advocate for embracing conflict. Poststructuralists view tension and conflict as an opportunity for knowledge production. If teachers are to address cultural and societal differences in their classrooms, they must recognize conflict not as "grounds for despair but the starting point for creating a consciousness in students and teachers through which the inequalities generating those conflicts can be acknowledged and transformed" (Jarratt, 1991, p. 119). A poststructuralist writing classroom is a classroom where

> instructors help their students to locate personal experience in historical and social contexts…that lead students to see how differences emerging from their texts and discussions have more to do with those contexts than they do with an essential and unarguable individuality…in which students argue about the ethical implications of discourse on a wide range of subjects and, in so doing, come to identify their personal interests with others, understand those interests as implicated in a larger communal setting, and advance them in a public voice. (Jarratt, 1991, p. 121)

Poststructuralist writing pedagogy aims to show learners how language positions them: how their language choices are shaped by conventions and construct their identities. Intended not only to raise consciousness about language and social context, poststructuralist pedagogy also helps learners to gain control over their own roles in discourse and to find ways of refusing subject positions with which they may not wish to identify (Ivanic, 1998).

The challenge of creating and implementing poststructuralist pedagogy is in part a challenge to our ability to envision new kinds of spaces, institutional structures and new forms of cultural identity as part of reshaping and redistributing knowledge and its forms of production (Luke & Freebody, 1997). Poststructuralist writing classrooms provide opportunities for students to develop a sense of purpose and authorship and to teach "that writing something always means having the power to make decisions, and that the point

of writing is to say something that matters to the writer" (Ivanic, 1998, p. 341). Focusing on discourse as the site to critique power relations, poststructuralist writing pedagogy can then be used strategically to construct alternative discourses and to resist those discourses that oppress and subordinate.

The Landscape of Writing for Transformation

Writers can transform through the words they create on the page and share with others. While theorists, practitioners and researchers posit many different reasons and ways that this may be possible, they agree that writing holds great potential for re-making the self, the language that constructs the self and the world that contains them both. Emotivists draw on liberal humanist discourse to define the self and transformation as an individual healing experience. For emotivists, writing can offer the practice of emotional self-exploration and discovery. Emotivists believe that it is possible to heal the self through writing alone. While narrativists do not theoretically present a challenge to the liberal humanist idea of a coherent self, they do conceptualize the self as primarily a social being constructed through stories and the relationships they make possible. Within a narrative framework, fragmented stories are in need of transformation which is seen as the creation of coherence. Through the writing and sharing of stories, this coherence becomes possible. Narrativist discourse also promises the possibility of constructing collective stories as alternatives to oppressive cultural narratives. For narrativists, the process of storying is transformative.

Social constructivists define the self as constituted through the process of socialization. Within the classroom, they use personal narrative to push writers to see themselves as socially-constructed. Social constructivists believe that oppressive social

conditions need to change and writing can be used for this purpose. They define transformation as social and political action. Poststructuralists posit the self as constructed through language and discoursal subjectification. Within a poststructuralist framework, selves constitute and are constituted by discourses and the historically-situated social worlds they make possible. Poststructuralists describe transformation as the disruption of dominant discourses. For poststructuralists, feminists in particular, transformation is also about discoursally locating bodily experiences within their historic and social conditions.

The space of the classroom has always been a contested site; there have always been rules and regulations as to who may enter and what forms of knowledge and knowledge production they may bring with them into the classroom. Teachers are traditionally positioned as guardians of these spaces and the activities that occur within them. Inside of classroom walls, writing has most often been seen and practiced as a form of communication and an exercise in traditional academic literacy. Emotivist discourse challenges the boundaries of the writing classroom by defining personal narrative as an academic genre and the writing workshop as an academic literacy practice. Narrativist discourse expands the traditional writing workshop as classroom practice by using the workshop for the sharing and collective creation of stories. Social constructivist discourse dissolves the boundaries between the classroom and the world outside of the classroom by pushing students to write to change the social world. Poststructuralist discourse reaches beyond the classroom walls and the discourses that construct those walls as impermeable by creating the space for students to draw on

discourses of resistance and agency that offer subject positions that embrace difference and dissonance.

Whether a student brings her individual self, the story of herself or her multiple selves to the classroom, writing can offer her a way to transform. She may want to heal inside where she experiences pain and remains trapped by the memories of her injury. She may want to transform the social and cultural space around her because the community she comes from oppresses and alienates her. She may want to do both because she understands them as connected and inseparable. She can write for personal and social transformation if she writes in a space that embraces her and her language and all that she brings with her. The discourses in the literature on writing and transformation conceptualize the potential of language to enact change in different ways. Each discourse questions the boundaries between the personal and the academic and confronts modern Western ideological beliefs about language and reality. While the discourses may differ in their constructs of the self, language and transformation, they agree that writing to transform *begins* with writers: their emotions, their stories, their histories and their desires. The discourses agree that the classroom can become a landscape of writing for transformation.

Interchapter 2: Text-Wrestling Essays by Brittney and Zackary

Consumerist Education by Brittney

Consumerism is prevailing in current culture and has been for quite some time. Even people who make a conscious effort of avoidance find themselves under a constant barrage of advertisements teeming with images for who you should be. People willingly invite consumerism into their homes every time they turn on the television or open a

magazine. Economic stress is causing parents to allow their children to be brainwashed by the media. These ideas are becoming ingrained in the minds of children and they will take the images with them into adulthood. Because we are living in a culture determined by economic interests, the consumerist view is invading our minds, stealing our individuality and having negative effects on our behavior and attitudes.

According to Mark Edmundson's essay, "On the Uses of a Liberal Education," the images portrayed by the media have infected the minds of college students and are taking away their originality. He believes this lack of originality results from the fact that students have "imbibed their sense of self from consumer culture in general and from the tube in particular" (98). For many current college students, a great amount of time was spent growing up in front of the television. Because parents are forced by the economy to work more, many cannot afford interactive and stimulating day-care centers. This results in the hiring of babysitters who have a tendency to put children in front of the television while they are talking on the phone or raiding the refrigerator. Some children do not even have light supervision; they are given a key to let themselves in the house after school. Parents are not around enough to encourage children or participate with them in more productive ways to spend their time and expand their mind. As the population grows, more and more children are growing up in cities where they do not have a yard to play in or woods to explore, forcing them to remain indoors. Most children need encouragement to participate in tasks for learning or else they will choose the television for passive entertainment. Television presents children with airbrushed images of people who they try to emulate, but cannot because they are merely images; they are not real. Striving to be like these television role models leaves children feeling

inadequate, insecure and unhappy with themselves. They lose the ability to be original because they are brainwashed by the "perfect" images on television.

When these children leave the nest to attend college, they are usually still engaging in the quest of self-definition. As a consequence, it is very common for students to want or feel the need to conform. The experience of going away to college is the first time living away from family for a lot of young adults and this can cause them to feel more insecure. Many students hold their true selves back because they want to fit into the college culture. Conformity to the college quo makes this transition from family support to independence easier to bear for some people. When they are particularly unsure of themselves they can turn to the media to see examples of people who they can become. Advertisements for products don't merely try to sell a product; they "show you what sort of person you will be once you've acquired it" (99). People have a tendency to judge others based upon the type of products they choose to represent themselves. Certain products seem to fit into stereotypical images of people. If you want to appear sporty buy brand name sweatshirts with logos on them. If you want to portray yourself as an intellectual buy horn-rimmed glasses, khakis and oxford shirts. The list could continue on and on. It is very easy to figure out what type of person you want to represent all you have to do is buy the products. It is easy to fool just about anybody. It is very hard to be original in this type of environment simply because everything is already defined. It is also hard because people are very judgmental. This is why there is a propensity to play it safe through consuming and conforming.

Part of this conformity is exhibited in a lack of passion for life. Out of all of Edmundson's students he praises one in particular who stands out from the student body,

Joon Lee. He commends Joon Lee's intellectual ability but more importantly his individualism. "It's his capacity for enthusiasm that sets Joon apart from what I've come to think of as the reigning generational style" (98). Because Joon pursues his own interests and does not care what others think of him, he is freer to be himself. He is not worrying about the right shirt to wear or appropriate thing to say; he is simply Joon Lee. His enthusiastic approach to life is what sets him apart from the other "self-contained" students (98). The other students do not understand why someone would want to be an individual. To them it is not cool to be original. Being like others is what makes them happy. Unlike other students Joon is not afraid of risking judgment by others because he is secure in himself. Edmundson describes an encounter of two students engaging in an argument on campus. He was very surprised to see this spectacle because due to the nature of conformity "strong emotional display is forbidden" (98). People do not like to draw attention to themselves; they want to blend in. When attention is drawn to the self, judgment is risked. The media has set the standard for our actions and this has been ingrained in our minds since we were children. Anyone who behaves differently from the "calmly self-interested…attuned to the conventions and ironic" characters on television is not accepted by other wanna-be television characters (98). This is why students do not accept Joon Lee and the reason for extreme judgment. Ironically, the heated argument Edmundson witnessed was practice for an acting class. People can't risk negative judgment; as a consequence, passion isn't exhibited in public.

This lack of emotion is also seen in students' approach to learning. Students are concerned with pleasing their professors in order to receive excellent grades to secure a career with a high salary when they graduate. Learning for the sake of learning is out of

style. No enjoyment is extracted from learning, many student know the least amount of work they have to do to do well and only concentrate on that amount. I've personally heard students remark about their unfamiliarity with the library and try to sound cool about the fact that they've only been there three times and are a sophomore. It's the end they are concerned with and not the means. Students' lack of desire for learning is also seen in the classroom. Edmundson uses an example from his classroom of "rebound teaching" which supports the idea of just going through the motions in the classroom (100). This type of interaction consists of student and teacher having a conversation based wholly on worthless comments. Nothing substantial comes from the interaction; it's all about making what you say look more important than it actually is. I've often been disturbed by this phenomenon in some of my own classes. At first I thought I might be missing an integral part of the conversation and that was why it was appearing to be nonsense to me. But after I witnessed the interaction a few more times I realized the student was doing this in order to gain the professor's attention and possibly receive recognition when grading time came at the end of the semester. The teacher was participating in order to keep class flowing. By doing this, the teacher was allowing the student to unpassionately advance her education.

Professors may not agree with students' lack of passion and individuality, but according to Edmundson there is little teachers can do to alter this current attitude of students. The impersonality of a large university contributes to a passionless approach to learning. In class sizes of hundreds of students the interaction of student and professor is quite limited. Students are inhibited from speaking in class because "the thought of being embarrassed in front of a group fills them with dread (104). People do not want to stand

out from the crowd. They are afraid of saying the wrong answer or asking what might appear to be a silly question because they do not want to risk making a fool of themselves. What is not realized here is that learning is supposed to be about taking risks and if you do not ask questions, however simple they may be, you will never know the correct answer. In short, students are more concerned with what others are thinking about them than they are with learning. Many professors are frustrated by the lack of excitement about learning by students and like Edmundson they "want some of them to say that they've been changed by the course" (97). But there is little professors need to keep their careers advancing in order to participate in our consumerist society.

All institutions of society have been plagued with consumerism; there is practically no way of escaping. Even universities, which help to shape and expand the minds of young adults, cannot close their doors to consumerism. Students are bringing in consumerism through their upbringings. They are also entering college at an age in which people most frequently feel less secure in themselves. In my college situation I took four years off after high school. I feel this has helped me immensely in not being affected by the conformity of college. During those four years I was able to figure out myself a little better and understand that it is more important to be an individual rather than conforming to the status quo set by the media. During high school I was a conformist and I owe this to the fact that I led such a sheltered life. Going right to college after high school would have continued my need to conform. I recommend taking time off before college to check out the "real world" to everyone who feels they need to do a little bit of exploration of themselves and society before they embark on a

college career where further conformity can be quite a temptation if you are not prepared to fight it.

Edmundson concludes his essay by stating that a change can be made and it needs to be facilitated by individuals (110). I agree with Edmundson. More people need to stand up to the strong structure of consumerism and conformity. We need to be conscious of the fact that the media ingrained ideas of conformity into our minds since we were children. A realization that these ideas are not necessarily right and good for all people just because the media says so will lead some people in the right direction. Reading essays similar to "On the Uses of a Liberal Education" is another great way to be aware of your own place as a student in consumerist society. There are a wide variety of authors out there who extol the virtues of being an individual and making your own decisions. Exposing yourself to these works may shed some light on how great it is to think for yourself and not be constantly worrying about what others think of you. By spreading the word about the negative effects of consumerism and living in a way that defies the conformity of society you will make your own life and the world a better place.

Works Cited

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The Capitalist Plot to Perpetuate Pervasive Consumption by Zackary

Current American culture is one of rampant over-consumption. As a people, we are overfed, overpaid and undereducated, consuming far more per capita than any other nation [1]. We live our lives without the ability to achieve true happiness and freedom because our capitalist system will not allow citizens to receive a strong liberal arts education. Such an education would end pervasive consumerism; a well-rounded perspective is necessary to see through the shallow happiness of today's American consumerist culture.

Part 1: Capitalists Steal from the Liberal Arts and Give to Their Own Profits

The United States uses a capitalist system to distribute wealth. What this means is that a free market of trading between businesses and consumers creates competition, which theoretically keeps prices low and quality high. As a particular capitalist gains wealth, they have an advantage over their competitors; with more money to advertise and promote their products and to expand the reach of their business, the company can increasingly outgrow their competitor until the competitor cannot compete. This advantage for the wealthy is why most goods are manufactured by an increasingly smaller number of big businesses.

To further increase the amount of profit earned, companies rely on heavy advertising to promote their products. A particularly effective method is to promote an image to people who lack one of their own. What this means is that instead of marketing the advantages of a particular product, companies use hip images of freedom and youth to suggest what kind of people own their products. Young adults, being the most insecure people, are bombarded with advertisements promoting cool images. Within today's

American culture children learn that to be successful they must own the products that are advertised to them (Edmundson 99). Many of these products are "necessary" in a modern world and owning some leads to needing more. For example, a computer owner must have many peripherals to enhance their computer.

One of the easiest targets for advertisers is a college student with their newly earned freedom to engage in spending. In one of Edmundson's more disheartening paragraphs is a description of college students. Students wear "bills of monogrammed baseball caps. Quite a few wear sports, or even corporate, logos, sometimes on one piece of clothing but occasionally (and disconcertingly) on more" (105). As a university student, I have seen this fashion phenomenon. Although particularly popular pieces include companies who sell alcohol, cigarettes and computer software, the entire spectrum as described by Edmundson exists. Naturally, as depicted by this description of average students, it becomes expensive to own all of the products necessary for a successful life. To compensate for this fact, young people strive for jobs that pay more money, jobs that do not involve the liberal arts.

The nation's universities are also players in the capitalist game. They resort to the business tactic of advertisement to entice potential enrollees. It's easily seen around the university that more resources go to creating the guise of a financially sound institution than to improving curricula. The new buildings erected are at the expense of hiring professors to replace those that retired last year: a majority in the liberal arts. This same pattern is also true at other universities. According to Edmundson, the liberal arts programs at all universities have lessened their requirements and softened the grading curves in an attempt to gain popularity (103).

Today's younger generations know that an education in a practical field, often involving technology, will provide more opportunities to land a high paying job upon graduation. At technical colleges and trade schools, courses in unrelated fields are unnecessary. I attended a polytechnic institute and was put off by the lack of choice in my education. I know from my former classmates that many students chose the school for a lack of variety. Liberal arts educations are practically useless because the starting salary of a graduate is almost always significantly less than that of a similar specialty graduate. A philosopher will make less money than a computer systems expert and a historian less than an engineer. By using advertising to promote a consumer image to youth which makes expensive goods a necessity and by providing higher paying jobs to specialty graduates, the capitalists have created a cycle to perpetuate deflated enrollment in the liberal arts. This will ensure higher wages, a chronic drive to consume, therefore, higher profit margins.

Part 2: A Good Education in the Liberal Arts Will End Pervasive Consumption

Clearly within a world as described above, there is no place for a liberal arts education. Such an education after all does not entitle its graduates to high paying jobs. Without the elevated wages, these poor people will not be able to afford all of the necessary equipment for happiness. Herein lies the liberal education paradox. A good liberal arts education is the solution to the problem. Receiving a broad education may entitle an individual to another form of happiness: the kind that is not hinged to the current situation in the stock or job market. Such a person may be able to see through the shallow capitalist happiness.

The point of education is to allow an individual to achieve an acceptable level of safety, comfort and freedom. A problem occurs when our current consumerist culture equates this level of freedom with affluence; the liberal arts lose their usefulness. Instead, as stated more eloquently by Mark Edmundson, the goal of a good liberal arts education is to free the graduates from the constraints of a faulty system (108). If *this* purpose of the liberal arts were further understood more students would willingly enroll themselves despite the smaller paychecks. The American capitalists know this fact and have therefore weakened liberal arts programs.

Further inspection only reiterates the point. Liberal arts graduates can easily find jobs that cover the expenses of water, food and shelter. The students who choose a specialty field are clearly after more than the necessities for life. This was seen in my classmates at the polytechnic institute. I witnessed students staying at jobs they despised so they could afford nice cars and new computer gear. If students feel the need to own unnecessary things, why would they not choose an education to eliminate this condition? The reason: we do not know we have a condition because it's caused by the faulty system we are raised in. We cannot separate consumerism from the rest of our life because we have never been exposed to life without consumerism. Only the graduates of a good liberal arts program could make this distinction and free themselves from the faulty system.

As we scramble to consume as many resources and products as possible, we need to give thought to future Americans. Will they see us as a culture in the grips of capitalism, unable to break our habits? This will only not be true if, through an enlightening education, we eventually defeat the system that promotes pervasive

consumption. Without this monetary reinforcement, the big businesses will eventually loose their power to influence our education and our lives. Then the balance can be restored between seekers of safety, comfort, freedom and money.

Note

1. People argue with me on this one. I refer them to the United Nations Population Fund's ecological footprint; the United States consumes almost twice as many resources as its land provides.

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CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY AND THE RESEARCH CONTEXT

Introduction

This study began with the desire to explore how university students understand writing and transformation. I decided interviews would be the best way to get close to students and hear what they had to say about writing and transformation in college composition. Three years ago I started noting similarities between the adult learners I was studying and the students I was teaching at the university. I wrote in my teaching journal about these connections. I also started collecting portfolios and talking with students about their writing and the changes it was making in their lives. At the same time, I began reviewing the literature on writing and transformation to better understand the meaning other teachers, researchers and theorists were making of writing and its transformative possibilities

During the 2003 spring semester, I designed interview questions focused on writing and transformation in college composition. I invited the students from the College Writing courses I had taught during the last two years to participate in the study. I sent the invitation to participate in the study via electronic mail to 140 students (see Appendix A). Twenty-five students responded to the invitation and asked for more information about the study. After receiving the details of the study, twelve students out of the twenty-five initial respondents decided to participate in the study. I included all twelve participants in the research because I wanted to learn about writing and transformation from as many students as I could for the purposes of this study.

I started interviews during March 2003. I conducted the interviews in a small office on campus. During each interview, participants and I would sit by a desk with a tape recorder whirring between us and have a conversation about their experience in College Writing and the impact they believed their writing during the course had on them. The conversations took on a life of their own as each participant had a different story to tell, and I never knew where the conversations would lead. The first interviews gave us the opportunity to talk about the course, writing and transformation. The second interviews focused more on the individual essays each participant wrote during the course and picked up any loose ends from the first interview. I learned a great deal about the participants and their writing through these interviews. I also learned a great deal about transformative writing and college composition.

Research Questions

Because of my teaching experience, I began this study knowing that many university students take up their college composition curriculum in ways that change them. This dissertation study focuses on students who identified themselves as having done so. Through this research, I sought to understand how participants in the study understood the writing that they did in college composition and the changes that it made possible. My first and second research questions focus on the perspectives of participants and their descriptions and definitions of transformative writing. My third question investigates the pedagogical implications of the meaning participants made of their writing practices in their college composition course. The research questions are:

- How do students describe transformative writing?
- What literacy practices do students define as transformative?

- What are the implications of their descriptions and definitions on teaching college composition?

The answers to the first two questions help to make sense of how the participants in this study understand writing and transformation. The answers to the third question focus more on the relevance of this study to teachers of college composition.

Theoretical Framework

Theory is good, but it doesn't prevent things from existing.
– Jean-Martin Charcot

Reviewing the literature on writing and transformation allowed me to formulate the theoretical framework for this study. While each discourse on writing and transformation interpellates me in different ways, I align myself most with feminist poststructuralism as a writer, teacher and researcher. I have used writing to express my emotions, tell my story, enact social change and shift my discursive position. As a writing teacher, I find myself at different times supporting students in their emotional expression, helping them to develop their story, encouraging them to connect themselves to their writing and to challenge their ways of thinking and being in the world. Feminist poststructuralism embraces each of these practices. I ground this research in feminist poststructural theory because I wish to represent participants and their beliefs about writing and transformation *and* deconstruct those beliefs as I seek to understand more about their discoursal construction. Feminist poststructural theory allows me to represent the narratives participants tell about their experience and beliefs because it values these stories as a way to learn about the social world and the ways in which participants take up discourses as their own to construct their experience and sense of self (Davies, 1993). Feminist poststructural theory also recognizes the limitations of these representations and

positions them as partial and contingent on the context in which they were spoken and written. Participants in this study often reminded me that the representations of them in this dissertation offer only a glimpse of the complexity of their lives as they continue to change since their College Writing course and the interviews from Spring 2003.

I am a feminist; therefore, this study could only be feminist in its conception and undertaking. While many feminists have contested poststructuralism as a useful theory, I align myself with the feminists who see poststructuralism as offering emancipatory concepts of subjectivity, power and agency. As a feminist, I believe in gender equity and have a vested interest in the eradication of gender oppression. While gender often becomes a central point in my analysis, I understand identity as the intersection of gender, race, class, ethnicity and sexuality. My analysis of the data includes this intersection to the extent that the study focuses on identity as a factor in writing and transformation. I understand that identity plays a role in constructing each of the concepts in this study. Participants often spoke explicitly of their subjectivities shaping their understanding of themselves, their experience and their writing practice. For example, Tina often talked about what it meant to be an "Asian girl": how she came to name herself with those words and the impact of this identity on her sense of self, her ability to act in the world and the topics she wrote about in the course. I analyzed the discoursal construction of participant subjectivities as well as honoring the lived, bodily experience of the participants. While I assert that subjective experience and emotions are social, political, historically contingent, emergent and constructed, they are also real and can have force in the world (Abu-Lughod & Lutz, 1990).

For poststructuralists, "subjectivity is neither unified nor fixed… poststructuralism theorizes subjectivity as a site of disunity and conflict, central to the processes of political change" (Weedon, 1997, p. 21). Poststructural theory defines identity as a continual process, an interplay of language and power where subjects both take up discourses and are taken up by them. Subjects are made through discourses, and the space of change comes at the interface of contradictory discourses. Poststructuralists, along with feminists, claim the body as central to knowledge production and important to any political project. Feminist poststructuralists envision a notion of subjectivity as embodied and allow me to position bodily experiences and emotions as connected to the construction of knowledge. Feminist poststructuralism also allows me to embrace the often contrary experiences of the participants in the writing classroom by deconstructing the concepts of the unified liberal humanist subject and linear human experience. Feminist poststructuralism theorizes subjectivity as diverse, conflicted and complex as the participants in this study claim it to be for them.

As a feminist poststructuralist, I question the postmodern theoretical tendency to completely "textualize" the body as a collection of discursive practices (Bordo, 1993; Payne, 2000b). While participants drew on multiple discourses to construct their experience, they spoke of bodies that felt emotions and experienced physical sensations. The postmodern textual dissolution of bodies can erase the physical ways in which people live their lives and learn about the social world. As a researcher, I am interested in how participants use language to shape their experience, but I am also invested in representing that experience as more than language. I am not defining the body as an essentialized location of truth but more as a potential locus of knowledge production.

I understand language as a site of struggle where "our sense of ourselves, our subjectivity, is constructed" (Weedon, 1997, p. 21). Poststructuralists focus on the part language plays in the construction and representation of self, others and reality while also accounting for "the contingencies of *what* is said as well as *how* it is said" (Brodkey, 1996, p. 142). For poststructuralists, discourses shape language practices, reality and people as subjects. Poststructuralism positions me as well as the participants in the study as historically-, socially- and culturally-situated in discourses. For feminist poststructuralists, "it is language in the form of conflicting discourses which constitutes us as conscious thinking subjects and enables us to give meaning to the world and to act to transform it" (Weedon, 1997, p. 31). Participants in this study drew on multiple discourses to construct their understanding of writing and transformation. The language they used to do so shapes their sense of self and positions them within various discourses on transformative writing. Using a poststructuralist lens, I deconstruct the ways in which participants in this study defined writing and transformation by using discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1992, 1995) to code for shifts in subjectivity and moments where participants drew on discourses to construct their experience and to reinforce, interrupt and disrupt dominant discourses (Brodkey, 1992).

Feminist poststructuralism allows me to connect the personal to the sociopolitical by theorizing them as mutually-constitutive. Feminist poststructuralists draw a connection between individual identity and social institutions and define transformation as not only an individual goal but a process that also involves structural social and political change (McLaren, 2002). They position individuals as capable of political agency while also accounting for the institutional and discoursal practices that shape such

agency and understand power as constructed through relationships and as potentially productive and positive. They do not strive to eliminate power but to understand its mechanisms and work toward a more egalitarian and liberatory use of power (McLaren, 2002). I find this poststructural definition of power reflects my experience in the writing classroom and the experiences of the participants in this study. While I practice creating a classroom environment where students have authority, I am aware as a teacher that I have institutional power through grades that positions me as the one in the classroom with the most power no matter how democratic my teaching practice. According to the participants in this study, my responses to their essays always carried more weight than the responses of their peers or their own beliefs about their essays because I was "the teacher": a subject position they constructed through drawing on traditional cultural and institutional discourses as having more knowledge than students and more power as the one who would be giving them their final grade. Feminist poststructural theory offers me a framework within which to acknowledge the presence of power in the classroom and to also work toward using it *with* students and not over them.

As a feminist poststructuralist conducting research, I did not seek universal truths about college composition or search for authentic student voices. I attempted to understand the discourses that students articulated as they made meaning of their writing practices during their College Writing course. As Lemke (1995) states,

> *meaning* is a much more fundamental notion than *truth*, indeed more fundamental even than the notion of *reality* itself…claims about truth or reality are meanings made by people according to patterns that they have learned, and trying to understand how and why people make the meanings they do is more useful than fighting over the truths of their claim. (p. 156)

As a feminist poststructuralist, I closely looked at the ways in which participants used language to construct their experience. I also examined the relationships between

subjectivity, power and knowledge as they shaped the writing practices of students. I understand my language practices and subjectivities as well as those of participants as integral to the conceptual, theoretical and analytical work of this study. Feminist poststructuralism necessitates a connection between theory, research and practice. This study aims to generate theory from the research done with participants to inform the practice of teaching writing in the college composition classroom.

Approach

My theoretical position as a feminist poststructuralist grounds me as a qualitative researcher. Feminist poststructuralism and qualitative research share common ontological and epistemological beliefs: there are multiple realities and truths, and knowledge is partial, situated and relative. Due to these beliefs, qualitative researchers base their work on several assumptions. They believe that events can be understood only if seen in their context. They value the voices of those they are studying and attempt to capture their perspectives as much as possible. They also take a holistic approach to experience by immersing themselves in the research setting. Qualitative research methods are chosen to align with these beliefs about reality (Ely, 1991). As a feminist poststructuralist qualitative researcher, I struggled to both represent the perspectives of participants and to deconstruct them as well. I occupied a theoretical and methodological space that challenged me to bring the stories participants told about their lives into the dissertation and to understand those stories as partial constructs that represented the complex work of participants shaping their experience, desires and ideological beliefs through spoken and written language.

Qualitative research grounds itself in a philosophical position which is broadly "interpretivist" in the sense that it is concerned with how the social world is interpreted, understood, experienced or produced (Mason, 1996).

> Whilst different versions of qualitative research might understand or approach these elements in different ways (for example, focusing on social meanings, or interpretations, or practices, or discourses, or processes, or constructions) all will see at least some of these as meaningful elements in a complex – possibly multi-layered – social world. Qualitative researchers base data generation on methods which are flexible and sensitive to the social context in which data are produced. (Mason, 1996, p. 4)

While generating data, qualitative researchers actively construct knowledge about the social world according to certain principles and using certain methods derived from their ontological and epistemological position (Mason, 1996). My ontological position values the knowledge, views, understandings, interpretations, experiences, and interactions of participants as meaningful properties in the social reality which my research questions are designed to explore. Because of my epistemological position, I generated data by interacting with participants, talking with them, listening to them and attempting to gain access to their ideological positions surrounding transformation, writing and college composition. The interpretation of the data comes from my understanding of how participants made sense of the writing they did in College Writing and its impact on them.

Research Setting

I conducted this study at a large public research university in a small New England town with approximately 18,000 undergraduate students. Eighty-three percent of the students identify as White, 8% as Asian American, 4% as African American and 4% as Hispanic. Fifty-one percent are female. Seventy-five percent are from the same state as the university, and 77% of undergraduates are age 18-21. The university requires

that all students take a writing placement exam administered by The Writing Program. Based on the results of the exam, the university either exempts students from taking a first year writing course, places them into English 111: Basic Writing or places them in English 112: College Writing. Most of the students placed in College Writing take the class during their first year at the university, but some students wait until later in their course of study. The Writing Program keeps each section of College Writing small with a maximum of twenty-four students, and graduate students teach most sections of the course.

The Writing Program faculty and staff design the curriculum for English 111 and English 112. In the four years that I have taught for the program, the curriculum has evolved to meet the needs of students and reflected changes in composition theory. Through student evaluations from each semester, the program has responded to student critiques of the curriculum. The program has also shifted toward a more critical, socio-epistemic perspective on writing. The College Writing curriculum addressed in this study reflects the ideology of process pedagogy. The course curriculum places the texts of students at its center, welcomes the narrative voice, focuses on the process of writing and implements writing workshops. College Writing also introduces students to the conventions of traditional academic essays like writing thesis statements and documenting sources. It challenges students to move away from the five-paragraph essay format they may have learned in high school by experimenting with language and developing their own thinking through the space in the curriculum to write non-traditionally. The course familiarizes students with writing essays for a university setting by teaching traditional academic literacy. The curriculum emphasizes writing essays

with strong introductions and conclusions, developing thesis statements and adhering to the conventions of White Standard English. One of the goals of College Writing is for students to finish the course with the skills necessary to write an essay for an academic audience. Another goal of the course is for students to become aware of and to develop their writing process. The course emphasizes revision by requiring that students write four drafts of each essay. The course also has a journal writing component. The course encourages students to explore their writing practices, to write for various audiences and to create a writing process that works for them.

During the summer orientation and training, The Writing Program gives new teachers a basic College Writing syllabus that outlines the requirements of the course and its schedule (see Appendix B). According to this syllabus, the writing requirements of the course consist of five essays: an autobiography, a text-wrestling essay, a research essay, an open essay and a final essay that involves peer review and self-reflection. The Writing Program expects that teachers will give students written feedback on each of their essays as well as hold individual conferences three times during the semester. Most teachers design much of the time spent in class as a writing workshop with students participating in peer review. Drawing on emotivist and social constructivist discourses, The Writing Program designed the course to encourage students to write about their personal experience as well as to connect that personal experience to larger sociocultural contexts. Because the course moves from the autobiographical to textual analysis and research, it guides students as they move between the personal and the academic. The open essay also creates space for students to experiment and play with language in an academic context.

A group of teachers from The Writing Program designed an anthology for the College Writing curriculum. *The Original Text-Wrestling Book* (2001) contains a range of essays that address various social and political issues. Teachers use this book in varying ways; some use it throughout the course as a reader, and some just use it for the text-wrestling essay. I assign students to read essays from the anthology throughout the semester. All of the participants in this study used the text-wrestling book during the course while writing their autobiographies, text-wrestling essays and the open essay. They all read "The Mountain" by Eli Claire while writing their autobiographical essay. Nine of them read "On the Uses of a Liberal Education" by Mark Edmundson for their text-wrestling essay; two of them read "Seeing" by Annie Dillard; one of them read "Mirrorings" by Lucy Grealy. While writing their experimental essay, they all read "How to Tame a Wild Tongue" by Gloria Anzaldua as a class assignment. I used *The Original Text-Wrestling Book* to open discussion about each genre and to offer students examples of the genres they were writing in the course.

In order to support Teaching Associates while they teach College Writing, The Writing Program assigns each teacher to a Course Director Group. These groups meet once a week for first time teachers and every other week for veteran teachers of College Writing. The groups in which I participated offered Teaching Associates the space to talk about their experiences in the classroom, to share ideas for teaching the class and designing writing assignments and to problem solve when issues arose in the classroom. Each group consisted of approximately ten Teaching Associates and a faculty/staff member who facilitated the group. The groups provided me with a generative forum for thinking about the teaching of writing. These groups also helped me to think about the

issues raised in the research and writing of this dissertation as I was able to talk with other teachers of College Writing about the curriculum and the teaching of college composition at the university.

As teachers gain experience teaching College Writing, The Writing Program encourages them to shape their curriculum to meet their strengths as teachers. The College Writing class that I teach maintains the basic structure of the course as outlined by The Writing Program. I require students to write four essays and a portfolio review. I also require them to keep a journal. I conference each essay with students. I also require that they revise their essay each time we meet in class or in a conference (see Appendix C). The College Writing class that I teach also focuses on the relationships between self, language, knowledge and power. Through writing the various essays, the course challenges students to investigate how they have learned to use language and reproduce knowledge. At the beginning of the semester, I ask students to examine and write about their experiences with writing from childhood to the present. Each essay assignment in the course also brings students to questions about the kinds of writing they have done and not done in school and why. I require students to include themselves in all of the essays that they write by asking them to bring their subjective knowledge to their texts. They must use the first person in each essay and work out their own thinking on each of the topics about which they choose to write as well as situate that knowledge within the larger contexts they are addressing in their essay. They create a portfolio throughout the semester and write a review and assessment of their work in the class as their fifth essay. Students also write in a journal during the course. Students may write about anything they want in their journals; I do not collect the journals. I require students to write a

minimum of five pages a week, and I count the pages when students come to their conferences.

For the first essay, I ask students to tell a story that shows the class something about them. I ask them to focus on a moment in their lives that was important to them and that shaped them. The essay assignment focuses on detail, description and reflection. I also ask students to connect their individual experience to the larger sociocultural contexts that they believe shaped that experience as a way for them to critically reflect on the personal. I also ask them to write toward connecting their experience to the classroom audience. The second essay, the text-wrestling essay, involves writing an essay that builds a relationship between the writer and a text. Students approach this essay from various perspectives from literary analysis to the autobiographical. This essay assignment requires students to position themselves as sources of knowledge with equal authority to the published authors of the text with which they wrestle in writing this essay.

The third essay assignment requires students to conduct research on a topic of their choice. They may research anything they want as long as they can connect it to themselves in a meaningful way. I tell them that I do not want a research essay that simply regurgitates what their sources have to say on the topic. To complete this assignment, they must draw connections between themselves and the topic of their essay. The fourth essay I call the experimental essay. Students may write about anything they want in any genre they choose. Students often write another autobiography; some choose fiction or performance pieces, and some write another essay based on research or an outside text.

Throughout the semester, students engage in several forums to discuss their writing. They participate in writing workshops with their peers where they give and receive written and verbal feedback in groups of four that are chosen by them. They also meet in pairs of their choice to participate in a more detailed conversation about their essays during their later drafts. I meet with each student at the mid-process draft of each essay to discuss their writing and to suggest revisions. At the fourth draft of each essay, the students hand in a folder that includes all of their drafts, any written feedback they have received and a process letter. I read these folders, comment on the final draft of the essay and write responses addressing the issues raised in the process letters. I do not assign grades to individual essays.

Students write process letters in class on the day that the final draft of an essay is due. Process letters consist of an informal piece of writing students address to me as if they are writing an actual letter about their essay. On the day an essay is due, I write questions on the board for students to answer about their essay in their process letters. I also ask students to write about anything else they feel important about the essay and the process of writing it. I intend these letters as a space for students to reflect on the writing that they did and the drafting and revising process for the essay. These letters most often contain the students' understanding of their goals for the essay, their successes and failures with the essay and what they learned through the writing process.

The final writing assignment for the course is a portfolio review and assessment. At the end of the semester, students return to each of their essays and complete final revisions and then write a review and assessment of the work they completed in the course to include all of their essays, their participation in writing workshops and in the

course as a whole. They also give themselves a final grade based on their assessment of their performance in the course. They submit their final revisions and their portfolio review and assessment at the end of the semester during their final conference. During this conference, students read their portfolio review and assessment, and we discuss their work in the course and bring closure to the class. After the conferences, I read the complete portfolio of each student. If the student assigned themselves a grade that honestly reflects their performance in the course, then the grade they gave themselves is the grade I record for the university. If I believe the student earned a grade different from what they gave themselves, I assign them the grade I believe they earned and contact the student to inform them of my decision and the reasons behind it. I have had very few occasions where students graded themselves differently then I did and most often they graded themselves lower than I did.

Research Participants

The research participants in this study consist of students who took College Writing with me as their teacher at some point from September 2001 to September 2002 (see Table 1). At the time I sent the invitation to students, I had taught College Writing for six semesters. Participants in the study include students from four of those semesters. Students who responded to the invitation to participate in the study from the first year I taught (Fall 2000/Spring 2001) decided not to participate in the study. I taught College Writing for two semesters for the Residential Academic Program (Fall 2001 & Fall 2002). Five of the participants took College Writing through the Residential Academic Program during one of these semesters. This program allows students to choose to take courses with students who live in the same dormitory with the goal of creating residential

Table 1: Self-Reported Characteristics of Participants

Semester/ Program	Name	Age at time of interviews	Gender	Race	Ethnicity	Language	Social Class	Year in college during College Writing	Year in college at time of interviews	Major(s)/Minor
Fall 2001 RAP	Julia	19	female	White	Irish/Albanian/German	English	middle	first	second	marketing/ journalism
	Michael	20	male	White	Portuguese/English/ Irish/ Native American	English	middle	first	second	communication
Spring 2002	AnnMarie	20	female	White	Italian/Puerto Rican	English	upper middle	first	second	microbiology
Summer 2002	Kirsten	37	female	White	Polish/French	English	working	first	first	individualized degree program
	Preety	20	female	Asian American	Nepali	Nepali/English	middle	second	second	economics and communication
	Zackary	23	male	White	Northern European/ Danish	English	middle	third	fourth	environmental science
Fall 2002 RAP	Brittney	25	female	White	Irish/English	English	middle	second	second	natural resources/ journalism
	Natasha	18	female	White	Russian/Jewish	English	middle	first	first	nursing
	Tina	18	female	Asian American	Vietnamese/Japanese	English	upper middle	first	first	biology (pre-med)
Fall 2002 TAP	Dan	19	male	White	Italian/Swedish	English/ Spanish fluent	middle/ working	first	first	computer engineering
	Patty	19	female	White	Irish	English	middle	first	first	mechanical engineering
	Shane	19	male	White	Irish/German/ French Canadian	English	middle	first	first	mechanical engineering

learning communities. I taught College Writing for the Talent Advancement Program for one semester (Fall 2002). Three of the participants took College Writing as part of the Talent Advancement Program for engineering majors during this semester. This program creates cohorts of students based on their majors. These students live together and take all of their courses together for their first year at the university. I taught College Writing once during the summer (Summer 2002). Three of the participants took the course during that summer session. This class was much more intense than the fall and spring semesters because the class met three days a week for three hours at a time during the summer. The class also consisted of only twenty students. This summer class was also extremely diverse by university standards. I taught College Writing as a traditional course for one semester (Spring 2002). One participant took the course during this semester with students from the traditional first year university community and was not connected to any additional academic program.

Most feminists focus their research on women and work toward changing women's lives. When I began this study, I knew that I wanted to represent women's experiences with writing and transformation because I believe that writing can offer women a way to resist the gender violence and oppression that come with living in a patriarchal society. I also knew that I wanted to include the experiences of men and hoped that male students would respond to the invitation to participate in the study. I had taught many men who had experienced patriarchal oppression that had limited their ability to live full lives. I wanted this research to resist the idea that *only* women need to transform and heal. I wanted this research to show that writing can offer women and men the possibility of transformation and the potential of liberation from the imperatives of

patriarchal discourse. Even though I did not focus on women in this study, I consider this research feminist because of its critical perspective on gender. I also consider this study feminist because I hope to use this research to work against oppressive institutional practices in the writing classroom. I also hoped that people of color would respond to the invitation to participate in the study because I wanted to better understand how race and ethnicity shape the experience of transformative writing. I was also interested in investigating the role of social class in writing and transformation.

Before the first interview, I gave each participant a form to complete that asked them questions about their identity and their participation in the study (see Appendix D). All of the information I used to represent the characteristics of participants comes from this form and their descriptions of themselves. Eight women and four men chose to participate in the study. Forty-eight percent of the students I have taught in College Writing have been women. The descriptions of writing and transformation by participants offer some insight into how discourses on gender may construct the practice of transformative writing. Ten of the twelve participants identified as being White with some diversity in ethnic background. Two of the participants identified as Asian American. The limited diversity in racial background of participants represents the students I have taught at this university. Ninety percent of the students I have taught in College Writing have been White. Because of the limited racial and ethnic diversity of participants, this study does not offer much knowledge as to how race and ethnicity may shape transformative writing; however, the ways in which some participants referenced race make it very clear that for them writing and transformation involved issues of racial identity. Two of the participants came from a working-class background, nine identified

as middle-class and one identified as upper middle class. The social class background of participants also represents the social class background of the students I have taught in College Writing according to the autobiographical accounts by students in the course. Even with the limited diversity in social class among participants, analysis of the data shows that participants drew on the discourses of social class in their writing and in their descriptions and definitions of transformative writing. Although I would like to be able to draw conclusions about the connections between race, class and gender and writing and transformation, the numbers in this study are too small for me to be able to do so. I use the characteristics of participants for speculation but not to draw conclusions (Ivanic, 1998).

The twelve participants in this study consist of a group of students ranging in age from 18-37. They took College Writing at various times in their academic career. Some of them are traditional first year students; some of them are not. According to their interviews, they all shared the belief that College Writing was going to be nothing more than a required course they needed to get out of the way to graduate. They all come from a history of public education and grew up in the same state as the university. Each student who participated in the study signed an informed consent form (see Appendix E). Some of the participants in this study asked to be identified by their first name. Pseudonyms have been used to protect the participants who wanted to remain anonymous. Pseudonyms have also been used in the student essays included in this dissertation to protect the people named in the texts.

Data Collection

I began collecting data for this study during September 2000. While conducting ethnographic research focused on writing and healing within an adult literacy program, I observed my university writing classroom looking for indications that university students were using their College Writing curriculum in ways similar to the adult learners: to heal from violence and trauma. I noticed that many university students did use the curriculum for these purposes as well as for other purposes that I would define as transformative. I kept written accounts in my teaching journal of the moments when students referenced writing they had done as making a difference in their lives. I recorded the language they used to describe their writing as well as what they identified as changing. Keeping a record of these moments has shaped my thoughts about writing and transformation as well as informed my pedagogy. My teaching journal helped me to formulate my research questions and to design this study. The data for this study include two interviews with each participant. The data also include the complete portfolios of each participant from their College Writing course.

Interviews: Conversations with a Purpose

During previous ethnographic research, I found interviews an invaluable research tool for understanding the meaning participants make of their writing practices; therefore, I allotted a considerable amount of time to them in this study. I conducted focused, topical interviews (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). The interviews had some structure provided by the questions I asked participants about their experience in College Writing but were primarily unstructured conversations with a purpose (Burgess, 1984). I audiotaped each interview. I conducted two interviews with each participant. The first interview (60-90

minutes) began the conversation about writing and transformation and built upon the trust and intimacy I had established with each student during the time we were in the classroom together (Reinharz, 1992). I asked participants questions about their expectations for College Writing, their experience in College Writing and its impact on them. I conducted the second interview (60-90 minutes) approximately one month later to further discuss writing and transformation. This interview gave me the opportunity to ask participants specific questions about the writing they did during the course and their individual texts from their portfolios.

I prepared open-ended questions for each individual interview focusing on issues of writing and transformation. Open-ended interviews "enable researchers to generate descriptions of composing from the point of view and in the language of the writers they are studying" (Sullivan, 1992, p. 57). While the questions offered the interviews some structure, the interviews remained predominantly unstructured and open to the interviewees' ideas about their writing. I was interested in the stories that each participant would tell about their writing and its impact on their lives (Seidman, 1991). I was also listening for the discourses participants drew on to construct their stories. I saw these interviews as an opportunity to better understand participants' perspectives on their writing and to inhabit the emic space: the space of the "insider."

Written Texts

During their first interview, each participant gave me their complete portfolio from College Writing. Their portfolios consist of the final drafts of the four essays, process letters and portfolio reviews written during the course. Some of the participants also gave me all of the drafts for each of their essays. Michael gave me the book

manuscript he began during the course and finished the semester after he took College Writing. I used the portfolios for several research purposes. Overall, I used the portfolios to frame my thinking about each of the participants and their descriptions and definitions of writing and transformation. I read the complete portfolio of each participant to design interview questions for the second interview. I used the texts in the portfolios during the second interviews to ask participants specific questions about their essays and process letters. I cited student texts from the portfolios within the dissertation, and I included one complete essay from eleven participants (see Table 2) and an excerpt from Michael's book manuscript within the dissertation. I chose to include the pieces of writing participants referred to as the most transformative. I also used discourse analysis of student portfolios to look more closely at how participants wrote for transformation.

A Social Theory of Discourse

Using a social theory of discourse informed by Fairclough (1992), I conducted discourse analysis of interview transcripts and written texts by participants from their College Writing course. The discourse analysis framework developed by Fairclough brings together linguistic discourse analysis and social and political thought. Fairclough defines discourse as spoken or written language and positions language use as a form of social practice. He also defines discourse as "a mode of action, one form in which people may act upon the world and especially upon each other, as well as a mode of representation" (p. 63). He claims a dialectical relationship between discourse and social structure – discourse as shaped and constrained by social structure and discourse as also socially-constitutive. This dialectic avoids "the pitfalls of overemphasizing on the one hand the social determination of discourse, and on the other hand the construction of the

Table 2: Essays Written by Participants during College Writing

Participant	Autobiography	Text-Wrestling	Research Essay	Essay Four
AnnMarie	**Growing Pains**	For the Love of Yourself (Grealy)	Preventing Helplessness?	Independent Woman (autobiography)
Brittney	A Significant Occurrence	**Consumerist Education (Edmundson)**	Eating Morally	Journey of Self Discovery (autobiography/text analysis)
Dan	**The Death of My Grammy**	America: The Liberal Capitalist Nation (Edmundson)	Foliaic Chromomorphasis and Photosynthesis of Trees in New England	A Journey Through the Wilderness of Life (fable)
Julia	Saturday Mornings	Half Full: The Optimist (Dillard)	Soul Sisters	**"There's No Place Like Home for the Holidays" (autobiography)**
Kirsten	Leaving Home to Find Home	The Impact of Consumerism on Education (Edmundson)	The Biblical Scientist	**The Table (autobiography)**
Michael	The Day	The Pearl of Great Price (Dillard)	Who Exactly is Michael Jackson?	The Best Day of My Life (autobiography)
Natasha	Chess Board Dancers	Shame Culture (Edmundson)	**Sweet Madness**	And if the Bough Breaks… (fiction)
Patty	The Meaning of Family	Fear Induced Non- Individuality (Edmundson)	Autism and the Family Surrounding It	**A Life Lesson (autobiography)**
Preety	The Last Period of the Day	Buying Education (Edmundson)	**Women: Genetically Defective?**	**Women: Genetically Defective? (research essay)**
Shane	My Pain	Consumerism in Liberal Education (Edmundson)	An Introduction to Gas Turbines	**The Blind To All that Is (cultural/political critique)**
Tina	**Who Would Have Known**	Conformity (Edmundson)	Why?	Growing Up (autobiography/text analysis)
Zackary	Being Homeless for a Week	**The Capitalist Plot to Perpetuate Pervasive Consumption (Edmundson)**	Family Planning in China and President George W. Bush	Jumping Off a Building (fiction)

social in discourse" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 65). The social theory of discourse defined by Fairclough informed my thinking for this study by offering a discoursal understanding of the relationship between texts, literacy practices and social and institutional discourses.

Drawing on Marxist theory (Althusser, 1971), Fairclough (1992) asserts that ideologies have material existence in the practices of institutions, interpellate subjects and contribute to the production, reproduction and transformation of relations of domination. Fairclough (1992) also defines ideological struggle as a dimension of discursive practice and states, "disarticulating existing orders of discourse, and rearticulating new orders of discourse, new discursive hegemonies" may affect institutions and the societal order of discourse and lead to social change (p. 97). His position on the relationship between language practices and transformation as well as his conceptualization of social change as shifting discursive positions aligns him with the poststructuralist framework for this study.

Within his social theory of discourse, Fairclough (1992) organizes language into three functions. The identity function relates to the ways discourse contributes to the construction of social identities, subject positions and types of self. The relational function relates to how discourse helps construct social relationships and the ways participants enact and negotiate social relations, and the ideational function relates to how discourse contributes to the construction of systems of knowledge and belief and the ways in which texts signify the world and its processes, entities and relations. Fairclough (1992) argues,

> every clause is multifunctional, and so every clause is a combination of ideational, interpersonal (identity and relational) and textual meanings. People make choices about the design and structure of their clauses which amount to choices about how

> to signify (and construct) social identities, social relationships, and knowledge and belief. (p. 76)

He also frames his conception of discourse on three levels, text practice, social practice and discursive practice, to reflect the relationships between the micro-processes of texts and the macro-process of the social order (pp. 72-73). In my analysis of the data, I looked at the essays participants wrote to examine their textual practice. I also analyzed their interviews to better understand the social and discursive practices participants described as transformative. For example, the literacy practices participants identified as transformative represented in many ways a social practice of building relationships through the textual practice of writing for the course. Participants also spoke of their textual and social practices as embedded in institutional discursive practices. According to Fairclough (1992), people are

> always confronted with concrete practices, existing relations and identities which have themselves been constituted in discourse, but reified into institutions and practices...the discursive constitution of society does not emanate from a free play of ideas in people's heads but from a social practice which is firmly rooted in and oriented to real, material social structures. (p. 66)

The practice, events and structures that make up existing relations and identities remain in struggle, temporary, partial and contradictory. As a feminist poststructuralist, I understand language practice as the practice of power. Fairclough (1992) offers a social theory of discourse that allowed me to analyze the written texts by participants and their interview transcripts through a lens that positions language practice as political, social and transformative. When I coded the interview transcripts and written texts, I looked for the ways in which participants used language to signify their identity, social relationships and their knowledge and beliefs about the social world. I also coded the discourse of participants at the textual, social and discursive levels.

Data Coding and Analysis of Interviews and Portfolios

As a feminist poststructuralist, I define transformation as a shift in discursive practice, as the practice of taking up alternative discourses (Brodkey, 1992; Weedon, 1987). This definition guided my data coding and analysis. After the first interview, I listened to the audiotape of the interview and took notes for the second interview. I also reread the portfolio of each participant and took notes from it as well. I used these notes to construct open-ended and specific questions for the second interviews. After the second interview, I listened to the audiotape of the first interview again, and then I listened to the audiotape of the second interview and took extensive notes and transcribed sections of each interview. Through recursive analysis (Ely, 1991), I read and re-read transcripts and written texts and coded for references to the connection between writing and transformation. Using a feminist poststructuralist definition of transformation as a lens, I identified moments where participants drew on alternative discourses, for instance, when Dan took up emotivist discourse as an alternative to the familial and cultural discourses he stated he had drawn on previous to the course to construct his emotional practice. I also marked places in the transcripts and written texts where participants indicated an interruption or a disruption in their discursive practice, for example, when Patty stated in one of her interviews that her relationships with men had changed due to the writing she did in the course.

I coded for individual and shared stories, like the story many participants told about becoming more confident because of the writing they did during College Writing. I also looked for the metaphors that participants used to construct their writing experience in College Writing, for example, the metaphor of "getting it out" many of them used to

describe one of the reasons writing transformed them. I identified the discourses participants took up to describe and define their experience in College Writing, for instance, many of them drew on traditional academic discourse to contrast the writing they did in College Writing with their past experience of writing in the classroom as a way to describe why writing in the course transformed them. I also looked for the literacy practices that participants identified as causing them to change, like writing autobiography and the writing workshops. If three or more participants referenced the same idea, story, metaphor, discourse or literacy practice, I coded it as a theme. These themes became the answers to the larger questions that organize this dissertation.

After coding interview transcripts and written texts by participants for themes, I read at a more micro-level for several linguistic features to conduct discourse analysis. I looked for what Barton (2002) calls "rich features" – places where participants drew connections between their individual experience and emotions and the larger contexts that surround them. For example, when Tina writes to explain her response to her father and his emotions she states, "Fathers aren't supposed to cry." Using the words "supposed to," Tina signals her affinity to a discourse on emotion and bridges her individual experience to a sociocultural context that constructs her relationship to her father. I coded for "I-statements" (Gee, 1999) where participants indicated their thoughts, beliefs and desires, for instance, when AnnMarie wrote in her autobiography, "I knew the only way to heal was to go to school." I also marked the places where participants shifted from making "I-statements" to using subjects like "you" and "we" or using no explicit subject to make assertions about the truth of reality, like when Brittney states in her text-wrestling essay, "learning is supposed to be about taking risks" or when Shane writes in

his fourth essay, "We are not fighting terrorism, we are fighting ourselves." Participants took up various subject positions through such statements and signaled their resistance to discourses as well as their alliances. Coding for these linguistic features helped me to better understand how the writing participants did during the course may have transformed them.

Many teachers and researchers draw on the concept of discourse in their research (Davies, 1993; Horsman, 1990; Ivanic, 1998; Kamler, 2001; Lee, 2000; Payne, 2000b). They define discourse and practice discourse analysis in multiple and varied ways. What they seem to have in common is an understanding of language as social practice which dialectically constitutes subjectivities and involves relationships of power and knowledge. In this dissertation study, I drew on this commonality. As I listened to the participants, I heard them draw directly on the discourses in the literature on writing and transformation, especially emotivist and narrativist discourses. I used the practice of coding the data for descriptions and definitions of transformative writing to disrupt the impulse to match the participants' words with the discourses in the literature. I came to the interviews believing that many of the participants would define transformative writing through *one* of the discourses in the literature. The process of compartmentalizing the literature into discourses had caused me to compartmentalize my thinking about writing and transformation. Coding the interviews through recursive analysis forced me to let go of my assumptions about how participants would define transformative writing. As I coded the interview transcripts, I marked each discourse participants drew on to describe and define transformative writing with a different color. Through this process, I learned that participants interwove discourses. I also found that

when participants drew on the discourses in the literature, they often did so in ways that challenged my thinking about those discourses. For instance, many participants connected emotivist and narrativist discourses, so the reason why these participants defined storying as transformative appeared in many ways to be about emotional expression rather than narrative.

Each participant drew on *multiple* discourses to define transformative writing and blurred the discoursal boundaries I had created from the literature. Throughout the interviews, I heard participants describe and define transformative writing in ways that correspond with the literature but are also much more complex and offer new ways of thinking about writing and transformation in college composition. While writing the chapters on the findings of the study, I returned to the tapes of the interviews for a third time to further transcribe each interview and deepen my analysis of the data. I found listening to the interviews while writing the findings of the dissertation helped me to stay connected to the words of the participants and their ideas about writing and transformation.

Participant Verification

While writing the dissertation, I returned to participants at various moments. I contacted them when I began text analysis of an essay, when new questions emerged from the writing of the research or when I needed to ask for clarification. Participants actively engaged in this process and were eager to help. They wanted to talk more about their writing and were very curious about the dissertation and when they would be able to read what I had written about them. The process of participant verification taught me the limits of interpretation and representation. During the process, some of the participants

stated that the essays they wrote during College Writing no longer represented them, and, if given the chance, they would make significant revisions to the essays to more accurately reflect their current beliefs and ideas. For example, I contacted Michael about using an excerpt from his book manuscript in the dissertation. He stated that the beliefs he expressed in the manuscript no longer represented his values as he had become more religious and less invested in the icon of Michael Jackson.

There were also several occasions when participants offered me new ways of thinking about my representations of them and their texts. Their interpretations of their words often challenged my interpretations and showed me just how subjective and situated discourse analysis and interpretation can be. I had read this about discourse analysis in the literature, but participants taught me this reality in their resistance to being read in ways with which they did not align themselves. For example, when I read Shane's fourth essay (see page 201), I read him writing from a very Christian discourse which he denied when I asked him about his text and my interpretation of it. I struggled with how to include both his understanding of his text and my interpretation of it. He stated that he did not consciously draw on a Christian discourse when he wrote his essay, but he also stated that he spent a great deal of time in church growing up, and Christianity played a role in his ethical development. I came to the conclusion that Shane offers an example of the complicated and often subconscious power of discourses to shape ideological beliefs and textual representations of the self. I have included the spoken and written words of participants as much as possible in the dissertation in an attempt to represent participants as they represented themselves in their texts and during their interviews.

Ethical Considerations: Power, Representation and Reciprocity

When I began writing this dissertation, the first ethical consideration I imagined had to do with the power dynamics of the teacher-student relationship. I believed I addressed that issue by only including students as participants who had completed their College Writing course and no longer had to worry about their grade being affected by their participation in the study. While I believe that choosing former students as participants gave some balance of power during the interviews, I also recognize that my institutional power as a teacher was always present to a greater or lesser degree depending on the participant. Some participants easily claimed authority during the interviews as they spoke of their experience in the classroom and interpreted their texts. Others granted me more authority as the one positioned as knowing more about writing. I worked very hard to create interviews that encouraged participants to tell the truth of their experience by leaving questions open and positioning myself as a learner.

As I analyzed interviews and written texts and made decisions about which participant texts to include in the dissertation, I found myself struggling with what I understand to be ethical dilemmas. Many of the participants in this study wrote and spoke about very private experiences. Some of them wrote essays that shared stories they had not written before and brought into language experiences that had been silent and hidden. They stated in their process letters and interviews that they struggled with writing these stories and sharing them with the other students in the classroom. They also stated that they very carefully controlled who read their essays, and most of them did not share these essays with their families. These participants also named the writing of these essays as the most transformative aspect of the course. As I started to include these

essays in the dissertation, I became concerned about making the choice for participants to share these essays with a larger audience. Participants had signed informed consent forms giving me permission to include their essays in the dissertation. I decided to ask participants again for permission to include specific essays so that they could have the option of refusal. Each of the participants agreed to allow me to include their essay.

In asking them for permission, I also realized that a lot of my struggle over including these essays came from my fear of bringing essays about bodily violence and "outlaw emotions" (Jaggar, 1989) into the dissertation. Participants had written and spoken about *their* fear of crossing the border between the private and the public. My struggle over including participant texts that crossed this border represented *my* fear of this crossing in many ways. Including texts in the dissertation written by participants that described experiences of sexual, physical and emotional violence challenged me to confront my own desire to deny the frightening and painful realities about which participants wrote. In their texts, participants went to a level of detail in describing their experiences with violence that I did not go with my own in this dissertation; I imagine this has to do with our different desires as writers and the different purposes to which we put our texts.

As the participants who wrote these texts stated in their interviews, it is difficult to read their stories of violation. My resistance to including participant texts about violence had to do with wanting to protect participants from being read by those who do not know them and wanting to protect readers from the painful stories some participants wrote. I also felt the cultural shame that surrounds their experience when I thought about bringing their texts into my dissertation. Recognizing my struggle with their texts

through writing this dissertation taught me that the dominant discourses in our culture that surround people who experience violence carry more power than I imagined; it taught me about the discoursal construction of my beliefs and about the ability of writing to help me understand myself. My struggle with including the texts by participants about their experiences with violence in this dissertation gave me more respect for students who write about violence in the classroom. Through the process of writing this dissertation, I learned that writing about violence in an academic context requires not only resistance to the cultural discourses that shame survivors of violence but also resistance to the institutional discourses that proclaim the personal, the emotional and the bodily taboo; it takes great courage and great desire to write against the power of these discourses.

I also found that discourse analysis and poststructural theory presented me with questions of ethics. Many of the participants in this study worked very hard to build an identity through their writing in the course. They stated in their interviews that the writing they did helped them to understand their experience and feel more confident in their sense of self: a self they consistently defined as having a unified and stable core. The process of deconstructing their writing made me very cautious about taking apart their language and the cohesion they strove to create. As I stated earlier, I am very invested in representing their experience as more than discursive practices because I believe they lived those experiences through their bodies as much as they used language to construct their experience and give it meaning. In speaking and writing about themselves and their experience, participants did not take up poststructuralist discourse. As a researcher, I wanted to be careful not to place a theoretical framework around their experience that effaced it. I did not want participants to disappear into discourses and

poststructuralist language. My hope is that by including a significant amount of the spoken and written words of participants in this dissertation that participants will inhabit the dissertation as much as the theory I use to analyze their language.

Most participants stated that they volunteered for this study because they wanted "to give back" to me. They wanted an opportunity to share the reasons that the course mattered to them and to offer me something in return for being their teacher. It meant a great deal to me to hear them say this during the interviews. Some of the participants also stated that they volunteered for the study so they could have the opportunity to talk about writing which they hadn't been able to do since they took College Writing. They offered me their time, energy and knowledge with enthusiasm and honesty and gave me more than I requested from them. One participant even offered to retype his essay, which he had lost to a computer virus, so I could include it in the dissertation (I told him I could type it from the hard copy I had from his portfolio). I did not have the resources to offer them financial compensation for their time. I respected their schedules and needs when arranging interviews and participant verification and remained as open as possible to the times and places we could meet.

Participants often wrote to me after the interviews to tell me that they had enjoyed talking about their writing and their lives and the interviews had benefited them in some way. Most of them claimed they felt better after the interviews because they got a chance to talk about themselves and what mattered to them with someone who listened and appeared to be very interested in what they had to say. When I think about what I can give back to them, I like to imagine that the process of articulation and reflection involved in participating in this dissertation research will help them to continue to write

for transformation in and out of the classroom in ways that continue to do all of the things they claimed to have done in College Writing. The interviews with participants were some of the best discussions I have ever had with students about their writing and the purpose and practice of the college composition classroom.

Limitations on the Study

There were many studies I could have conducted to investigate writing and transformation in college composition; this study is one possibility among many. I chose to limit my study to those students who defined the writing they did in College Writing as transformative. This is not a comparative study of students who identified their writing as transformative with students who did not. I placed this limitation on the study because I felt that within the scope of dissertation research, I could not adequately conduct a comparative study, and I was most interested in those students who defined the writing they did in the course as transformative. I also chose to focus the study on students who had taken their College Writing course with me as their teacher instead of soliciting students from sections of College Writing taught by others. Focusing the study on students from my classroom operated as both a strength and a weakness. It was a strength because I could more directly address issues of pedagogy in the study since I was the teacher in the classroom; I knew more about the relationships I had with students in the course and my intentions as a teacher than I would have had if I studied another teacher's classroom.

The relationships I built with the participants as their teacher also worked as a positive in the study because students felt comfortable discussing themselves, their writing and its connection to their lives. Because the participants and I were no longer in

the classroom together, participants seemed to be much more comfortable critiquing the curriculum of College Writing and their experience in the course. I imagine some of their comfort and mine also came from the fact that we were discussing the writing they did in the course which impacted them in positive, even if sometimes conflictive, ways. Studying my own classroom at times became a weakness because it caused me to be blind to aspects of the data that I took for granted. I worked closely with other doctoral candidates for peer briefing purposes to gain more distant perspectives on the research. We would meet once a week to read each other's chapters and to discuss data analysis and findings. My peers almost always offered me different ways to think about my data and showed me places in my writing that needed clarification and more analysis.

Organization of the Findings and Analysis

The conversation about the connection between writing and transformation centers in many ways on questions about what, how and why writing transforms. I organized Chapters Four, Five and Six to offer possible answers to these questions according to the participants in this study. Chapter Four addresses the question of what writing transformed for participants, Chapter Five the question of how writing transformed participants and Chapter Six why writing transformed participants. Each chapter also integrates possible answers to each question according to the discourses in the literature on writing and transformation. These questions point to the areas of dissonance within the conversation on writing and transformation, and the answers to them remain open to speculation.

Interchapter 3: Research Essays by Natasha and Preety

Sweet Madness by Natasha

For nights, I stayed awake and tested the color of my walls. Seeing as I was not allowed, under any circumstances, to paint those walls, I decided that pasting as many pieces of stray magazine paper as I could find would suffice. Sometimes I'd add a few pictures I drew or plain construction paper to give a homier feel. What resulted was a room suffocated by Victoria Secret ads, candy wrappers, photographs and random flashes of color. To my parents, this was a sign of eccentric creativity. To my doctors, this was a sign that my medication wasn't working. Or at least that's what they thought. Those doctors didn't know that I never took the medication in the first place. Trazedone made me a zombie; Zoloft made me a lunatic; Depakote made me…well, boring. As I later learned, I wasn't the only girl with Bipolar Disorder who tongued her meds only to spit them out when nobody was looking. I found that nobody liked the medication. Unfortunately, I also found out that none of this was helpful. My summer being sent from one hospital to another taught me only one thing: though many people, especially adolescents, do not favor medication as treatment for Bipolar Disorder, they find it is impossible to truly recover without it.

Before a patient is able to treat this extremely debilitating disease, they need to be properly diagnosed. Unfortunately for many children and adolescents, clinicians and psychiatrists are very wary of diagnosing a possible Bipolar Disorder sufferer with that disease. According to the article, "Patient Care," a person who is classically Bipolar has to have been affected by "one or more manic or mixed episode and, usually, one or more major depressive episode" (Gelenberg et al 50). However, what is viewed as "manic" in

adults is often different in children. For children who are quite young (elementary school level), their projection of mania is often characterized by hyperactivity. For the most part, neither parents nor school officials are bound to be alarmed by hyperactivity in a child. It is usually seen as kids just being themselves – all kids have unusual energy. However, psychiatrists are used to looking at this kind of behavior differently. If parents come to them complaining that their child isn't focused and always jumping off the walls, it doesn't take much for that psychiatrist to simply prescribe Ritalin after one interview with the child. A diagnosis of ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder) is not rare when it comes to elementary school kids who are having problems such as getting their work done, staying in one place or focusing on one thing. For some children, this is the correct diagnosis. Yet, for others, this could only be the beginning of a much more serious issue. It is one thing to be restless; it's another to find that restlessness turning violent often inflaming the child into screaming fits and possibly episodes of ripping one's own clothing. This too could be misconstrued as simply having an "eccentric" child. Kids will rip their clothes, cover their faces with mud and scream at the top of their lungs that they are greater than Michael Jordan. Or will they? And what happens when just as soon as that child reaches their energized peak, they crash into fits of anger and depression?

> The breadth of symptoms associated with pediatric bipolar mood disorder (BP) complicates differential diagnosis. Symptoms of mania in preadolescents must be distinguished from temperamental variants of normal childhood behavior, such as over activity, recklessness, bragging and imaginative play. (Weckerly 47)

This is when the psychiatrist is forced to look closer.

Unfortunately, most parents aren't about to start believing that their precious, perfect little babies need help. Therefore, on the off occasion that a psychiatrist does get

to evaluate such an out of control child, they are bound to see only one of the many sides of their illness. With me, it was the depression. When my parents first sent me to a psychiatrist in the sixth grade, I refused to get out of bed. I was pulled out, scrubbed clean and dropped off across the street. There a middle-aged woman commenced to evaluate me. After only two weeks, she had a diagnosis. I had a Borderline Personality Disorder (a pervasive pattern of instability of interpersonal relationships, self-image and affects) as it coexisted with a Panic/Anxiety Disorder. Parts of the definition applied. However, what my psychiatrist at the time didn't know was that I could go for a whole month without ever feeling sad or even remembering that I had ever felt sad. Instead, I felt like I was on top of the world. No, actually I was the world. I was everything. As a matter of fact, I was God. Or at least that's what I had managed to convince myself of during my high. I was temporarily put on an anti-depressant. During the time that I actually stayed depressed, the medication helped. My parents saw me wake up in the morning and get dressed for school – something that would never have occurred unless I was hit over the head with a baseball bat and forced to get ready. They also saw me eat: another thing I was not used to doing. My mother and father were overwhelmed. Their little girl was cured. And so I was. That is until the depression stopped and the mania kicked in.

Medication, when prescribed incorrectly, can have a horrifying effect. As I would later be told by my present psychiatrist, a person taking antidepressants during a manic phase will only be more manic. "If you prescribe an antidepressant for a bipolar patient who isn't taking lithium salts (or another mood stabilizer), the chances of that patient developing mania as the depression resolves are as high as 25-30%" (Gelenberg et al 62).

In other words, their symptoms will only worsen. Unfortunately, my psychiatrist at the time did not give me enough time. As a matter of fact, after I was prescribed my antidepressants, I hardly ever saw her. Her idea of "follow-up" consisted of calling my parents, not me, on the phone and asking how I was doing. After a little while, I began to realize that my medication was no longer working. I stopped taking my medication altogether. This, as I later learned, was definitely the wrong way to go. Had my parents wanted to admit that something was wrong, had I had the opportunity to stand back and evaluate the situation, I may have realized that the only way out was to get a new doctor and start medication meant for my illness. However, neither I nor my parents knew what was actually going on.

Had I been aware of what Bipolar Disorder was at the end of my elementary school years and my freshman year of high school, I would have probably been on Lithium or its equivalent. Lithium is used for the treatment of manic episodes as well as depressive episodes. After two to three weeks of treatment, it begins to show results, calming the manic phase and giving bipolar sufferers clarity that they may have been lacking for a good portion of their lives. However, Lithium cannot work unless taken regularly. A study published in Bipolar Disorders: 100 Years after Manic-Depressive Insanity showed that 60% of people on this medication chose not to take it on a regular basis. The study also mentions that one of the many reasons for that particular statistic is the age of the patient (Maj et al.354). The younger a patient is the more problems they are going to have with independence, which makes taking medication regularly difficult. Not to mention that looking at medication every morning and night can be extremely demoralizing thinking one isn't normal unless they take a cocktail of seven pills that

leaves them anything but normal – rather they are bland and disinterested. It can leave a person feeling not depressed but not happy either, in a constant gray middle that inspires no emotion, no genuine feeling. For a Bipolar Disorder sufferer who is used to spending nights writing, painting, dancing and creating without interruption, having that passion stolen by a simple pill can only make one want to return to being ill, no matter what the consequences may be.

When I was finally diagnosed with Bipolar Disorder during my extended vacation at a private hospital, I wasn't happy about being forced to take medication either. However, I didn't have the energy to refuse. Had I refused, the drugs would have been administered via much more uncomfortable avenues, and I was not ready to be restrained while a big needle was stuck into my behind. I also didn't find avoiding medication when I left the hospital any easier. Luckily for me, my parents were watching my every move. I was reminded to take my medication after every meal and was forced to do so in front of them, not in the bathroom where I could quickly be rid of the pills as I had done before. Unfortunately, not all families are as diligent. In fact, some families even agree with the patient, believing that medication only prolongs the illness (by making it more real). They believe that if their loved one is finally off the medication that they are cured and everyone is looking for a quick fix.

> Both patient and family require a persistent educational effort by the therapist to provide them with a factual understanding of the purposes and risks involved in the use of these medicines. However, clinicians soon learn that even apparently intelligent and knowledgeable patients and families often stubbornly resist these educational efforts…Patient and family may appear to accept the clinician's views and recommendations, only to gradually (and often secretly) reduce dosages or discontinue use of medication altogether. (Greenfield 112)

There are also the uneducated families that Greenfield talks about in The Psychotic Patient: the people who believe the illness is a weakness and that the taking of medication is just proof of that weakness. This means that there are some adolescent patients who don't even have the support of their family. If I have learned anything about keeping an adolescent bipolar patient in control, it's that they need help from others. Unless monitored from time to time, they will eventually discontinue medication and only increase their chance of suicide.

Since many adolescent bipolar sufferers fall into this particular category, sometimes the only other solution to medication is hospitalization.

> The American Psychiatric Association recommends admitting patients who (1) can't care for themselves adequately, cooperate with outpatient treatment, or provide reliable information to the physician; (2) are at risk for suicide or homicide; (3) lack psychosocial support or (4) the patient hasn't responded to outpatient treatment or (5) adequate outpatient treatment resources are unavailable in the community. (Gelenberg et al 66)

However, one has to be very careful about the kind of hospital they send their children to. In the summer of 2001, I spent most of my time in two hospitals. Before I entered the program at the first hospital, I was sure all hospitals treated patients the same – by strapping them down to their beds, filling them with medication and then monitoring their slurred speech and drooling only to pat themselves on the back for a job well done.

At the first hospital, nothing could be further from the truth. However, that didn't make the experience any better, just different. At this particular hospital, most patients were allowed to wander about the halls whenever they wished. In the morning, we were allotted time for "school work" which often turned into a few hours of passing notes with phone numbers and email addresses for later reference. The reason why this particular ward was so open was because it was available mostly to short-term patients. It was not a

ward for six month to whole year stays. It also wasn't a state hospital. Parents paid good money for their kids to be in a "happy" environment. Whether such was therapeutic or not wasn't usually questioned. This hospital was just a hotel with shoddy room service. If anything, my stay there just allowed me to sink deeper and set me on a mission to get around the few rules we were restricted to. In other words, nothing about the stay at this hospital did anything to help me. A bipolar patient needs structure. They need to be dragged out of bed every morning, watched while they brush their teeth, forced to do work and watched while they eat. They should not be allowed to go back to their rooms to sleep. Overall, a bipolar patient should be given as little freedom to fall back into their regular patterns as possible. Otherwise, the medication that they are being fed will not help.

The second hospital was, to my surprise, the exact opposite. It was still a private hospital so the social workers didn't leave us strapped to anything only to later clean us up and put us to bed. However, they were extremely strict. Shaving, plucking eyebrows, sometimes even going to the bathroom unless absolutely necessary was not permitted. The only option for shaving was to have a doctor stand there and watch a patient use an *electric* razor. We had set meal times and usually patients were forced to finish everything on their plate. Instead of school work, the day was filled with intense therapy sessions, sometimes in groups and sometimes alone with a clinician. The intake of medication was also monitored very closely. Patients were pulled out of bed at a particular time to take their medication at the window or else the medication was injected into their bodies. There was no way of getting around it: not even tonguing the pills. There were sporadic room checks to make sure nobody was holding their pills in their

pillows or dresser drawers for later attempts of suicide. Though I hated every minute I spent at this hospital, though I would routinely beg my parents to take me home, I knew that the longer I stayed, I would only get better until I could handle the outside world.

However, not all patients viewed it this way. I was new to the program. Most bipolar patients keep going back and never seem to get better. For this reason, even getting them into the program is an incredible challenge. The psychiatrists of these patients then opt for outpatient treatment as a compromise. Yet, this could only make their situation worse by feeding the patient false confidence that they have one-upped authority. If the patient is experiencing his/her manic phase, such a situation would only fuel their altered self-image further proving that they are gods, that they are invincible. If the patient is in their depressive phase, it could give the patient and his/her family the wrong idea – that the patient is not difficult to convince that they are sick but rather s/he is getting better.

> Outpatient treatment of acute psychosis may speed the process of recovery and avoid the stigma and loss of self-esteem associated with psychiatric hospitalization. On the other hand, outpatient treatment makes it easier for the patient and family to deny the severity of the illness and it affords the clinician a much diminished capacity to monitor the evolution of the patient's disorder. (Greenfield 8)

Because not everyone is well educated on hospitalization, clinicians must stress its benefits. Just like medication, it's intensely demoralizing; sometimes one needs to be brought down to their lowest level simply to see themselves and their illness more clearly. Unless the patient or the patient's family can judge the illness objectively, the possibility of that patient getting better is very slim. Granted, judging anything objectively in this kind of situation is incredibly difficult. The family and the patient need help to do so. Sometimes, a stay at a well chosen hospital can do just that.

I would love to say that patients when given help always accept it. I was lucky. I understood what would happen to me if I didn't listen closely, if I didn't pay attention to what was happening in my body and what was happening to my mind. However, many of the teenagers in my unit at the second hospital weren't as lucky. Many of them had other issues to deal with like rape, pregnancy and drug addicted parents. They spent most of their time worrying about the world around them instead of their own health. Many of them also wanted to leave to resolve these issues assuming they were only possible to mend in the outside world. So they did what I had to do to leave the first hospital; they faked being well. This may sound difficult, but it isn't. After a week, each patient knows every attending social worker and clinician. They know what they want and how they wish their patients would behave. Another week of perfect behavior (no yelling, no insisting on one's own wishes) and they are labeled cured. These patients are then sent back into a world that exasperates their illness only to find that they are helpless. They are then sent to more hospitals where the cycle begins again.

However, this was not my situation and also not the situation of a good part of my unit. After a little while, we were released but not on our own recognizance. For a week before release, parents are met with at least twice to set up a support system outside the hospital walls so that the structure created within doesn't collapse as soon as the patient leaves. Most of this depends on the kind of relationship a patient holds with their therapist.

> Because it is so crucial a matter, the therapeutic alliance must be a source of continuing concern and effort on the part of the clinician, no matter what disturbing or urgent events are unfolding in the treatment. (Greenfield 45)

Again, I was lucky. My parents were able to find me a relatively trustworthy psychiatrist that I still see every once in a while. However, not all adolescents with Bipolar Disorder can pay for a good therapist or a day program. Some don't even have insurance to cover such expenses for them. In a study done by "Outcomes and Accountability Alert," Bipolar Disorder is found to be more expensive to treat than most other cases of depression. It's even more expensive than treating diabetes. For adolescents with mental illness who cannot pay for outpatient care, many are left in hospitals until somebody else can take care of them. There are also the children who are sent from foster home to foster home which often only makes their symptoms worse.

At the second hospital, I roomed with two girls who were incredibly unlucky in their living arrangements. One of them was born into a mob family where people were often shot right before her eyes. The other was born into a drug addicted family and had not actually seen her real mother in a year. Both were sent to foster homes. Both were denied medication they needed because their foster parents used the money given to them by the government to buy themselves drugs and alcohol. Both kept coming back to hospitals to stay for a few months and then be spit out to reenter the cycle. While I was arranging for my leave, both were planning on staying through the next month because neither had the financial support to survive on the outside. Even if they had a chance of recovery despite their conditions, the possibility of relapse a few years down the road was certain. After all, medication and therapy cost money and for two teenage girls who can't provide the insurance to pay for that treatment, they are left to be passed around by social services until they are of age and on their own.

It is important to note that relapse is an issue that all adolescents and their families must be concerned with. Therefore, the act of discontinuing medication should be done carefully. However, not all clinicians are even willing to allow their patients to go off of Lithium, especially adolescents. "The majority of these patients will require continuous treatment with lithium, particularly those who have suffered two or more episodes of psychosis will require indefinite prophylaxis with lithium" (Greenfield 147). It is also important for a therapist to keep the patient and family informed about how difficult it is to predict Bipolar Disorder. It is impossible to say that one has been "cured." As I had mentioned before, anything can set off a relapse. For me, it was the traumatic incident of a friend's suicide. I had come to visit him one night when he said there were a few things on his mind – in his language that meant that he wasn't happy. We stayed up all night reminiscing about stealing potted plants from Stop & Shop, chain smoking outside of restaurants only to exhale on people's expensive clothing and dressing up for countless nights at the Rocky Horror Picture Show. We were laughing. I guess I wasn't paying attention. When I walked down to his kitchen to make him breakfast, a gun went off and one of my closest friends was gone. Even though I was doing very well at the time, losing him made me forget that I had ever been happy. For a while, I said nothing. A month later, I was uncontrollably manic to the point where I had to be restrained. At this point in my life, I realize that I would have been able to deal with such a loss better had I kept in contact with my psychiatrist and asked to be put on medication, even if it was just for a couple of months.

I hate medication. My parents, thinking it would be therapeutic, decided to keep all the empty bottles of pills that I was at one time forced to take in a bucket under the

sink. However, stumbling upon that bucket every morning is anything but a therapeutic reminder that I am getting any better. Instead, it makes me feel worse with each day. Though the medication succeeded in stabilizing my mood, I had lost all self-confidence and dignity. I felt like a two dimensional product of chemicals – I was not a human being but rather a robot oiled with lithium salts. However, I cannot stress how happy I am that I got to go to my senior prom, that I had the chance to graduate from high school. It is for these reasons that I feel I am able to look at my experience of diagnosis and treatment (as well as the experiences of those around me) more objectively. What I found were many years of unnecessary pain bestowed upon my youth for various reasons. The first, and most important, was the issue of diagnosis. My symptoms were clear yet the various clinicians that I visited refused to identify Bipolar Disorder as the cause of those symptoms based on the antiquated belief that children do not suffer from it. Instead, I was misdiagnosed with other illnesses which included Borderline Personality Disorder and Depression. The result was incorrect medication and prolonged hospitalization. Incorrect medication led to symptoms of psychosis: something I should have never experienced. Hospitalization was the only experience that did help me, however, by finding me a competent clinician to give me the correct diagnosis.

I strongly believe that all of this could have been avoided. This was the purpose of this research paper – to illustrate how difficult living with this illness already is; the mistakes made on the part of clinicians and the patient's family should not be adding to the child's distress. I hope clinicians are now aware that Bipolar Disorder *can* appear in children as young as six years of age. I hope that these children are also taught to feel more comfortable about their treatment so as not to jeopardize their future by refusing

medication. I hope that their road to wellness is not an especially long and unsuccessful one – not everyone has the insurance or deep pockets to pay for other people's mistakes. Most of all, I hope that when these children are in my position, when they are able to objectively review the course of their treatments, they are not disappointed. I hope that the difference for them is remarkable and that difference is here to stay.

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Women: Genetically Defective? by Preety

Are women genetically less intelligent than men? I wouldn't be surprised to find people who do believe that in fact we are less intelligent than men. However, before drawing any conclusions about this issue, it is very crucial to consider the historical trend of education. Women got the opportunity to go to school only recently compared to men. Even then few women attended school because some couldn't afford it and others simply were not allowed to go to school. They were pressured to take on the traditional roles of being wives and mothers. However, women's education is still taken not as seriously as men's. We still have to work extra hard and have to be extraordinary in order to prove we are also capable of doing things and being intelligent.

Women constantly have to struggle in order to pursue higher education. According to June Purvis, "As institutes were founded by men, controlled by men, and for the use of men, women's admittance was regarded with suspicion" (103). Women have to overcome many obstacles and prove to people that they are capable of doing well and intelligent enough to pursue higher education. More and more women are choosing to pursue higher education or a career. Moreover, now we see many women in professional fields simply because their ability to be professionals has increased with education and decreased sexism. However, discrimination and stereotypes are affecting women's ability to achieve. People have to realize that women's roles are not only limited to wives and mothers.

Statistics show that more and more women are pursuing higher education. According to Lynne Davis and Judith G. Touchton, "Between 1970 and 1986, women's enrollment in public institutions almost doubled from 2.4 to 4.7 million" (52). So what

does this tell us about women and their intelligence? The statistics clearly show that even though women are discriminated against, we have the potential to do well and succeed in academics. Moreover, this success is correlated with the opportunity and the access to an education. Now women have more access to get an education than before. Therefore, it is not surprising that the number of women pursuing higher education is increasing.

There are many reasons as to why more and more women are pursuing higher education. One of the reasons is that once we have an education, we can be financially independent. People still have the old perception that women go to college just to get a good husband who makes a lot of money. However, if we are educated, we make money for ourselves. We don't have to depend on a man financially, which is a huge step in women's advancement. Also, by getting an education, women can be in high positions that are traditionally considered men's. More importantly, women are trying to establish their own identity instead of being known as someone's wife or mother.

However, we are discriminated against in every aspect of our lives in our society, especially in higher education and professional careers just because we are women. Women students are neglected in the classrooms. According to Dr. Rose Marie Cutting, "...even their instructors were hostile to them and accused them of going to professional school merely to get husbands or to deliberately take jobs away from men" (82). Why can't we pursue higher education because we have the right to do so? Why can't both men and women have the same incentive to get an education? If we are getting prestigious jobs than we are considered to be stealing men's jobs. This is one of the biggest misconceptions that women have to deal with. It is absolutely absurd to think

that we get an education so we can steal men's jobs because we have more important goals to achieve than merely taking away jobs from men.

However, let it be noted that sexism doesn't only hurt females. It works against males also. The sexism that exists in our society expects both females and males to be a certain way. Women are expected to be feminine and men are expected to be masculine. If a man doesn't fit into the masculine category then his sexuality is questioned. In a sexist society boys don't cry. This supports some degree of male arrogance. However, it puts unnecessary pressure on both males and females. Therefore, it is important to realize that sexism not only affects women but men as well.

Historically, men have unsuccessfully tried to prove that we are less intelligent than they are; therefore, we should not be doing any learning. "A proper wife should be obedient as a slave…The female is a female by virtue of a certain lack of qualities – a natural defectiveness" (Aristotle, Lopez 19). However, anyone who is aware of sexism can see that this was just an attempt to hold us back so the other sex can have complete control over things. Obviously, men feared that once we got an education, there would be more competition, there would be less job availability and they would have to be more qualified to get the same job.

Sexism is one form of discrimination that we have to deal with whether we are in the classroom or in the workplace. Some college students, including both women and men, are aware of such a thing. However, there are still many students of both sexes who don't see it occurring in present society. Some people, especially men, claim that it was only back in the old days. Likewise, some women also expressed that they didn't have to face sexism in their lives. To me, people who think that sexism doesn't take place are

either ignorant of the issue or are unaware of it. The sexism we are dealing with is very subtle so most people might not know that it is taking place.

We are made to think that things are getting better for women. Even to be more precise, we are made to believe now that men and women are equal. However, in reality, it is not true. If things were really getting better for women, why is sexism so persistent everywhere? Why are women not taken seriously in the classroom and in the workplace? If there are people who believe that sexism is gone, then they are in denial or unaware of this issue. It is very evident that women still face sexism.

Moreover, we are generalized in terms of choosing easy majors in higher education. From my own experience, I believe most people choose a major because they are interested in it. My parents and relatives bombarded me with suggestions in terms of what I should major in as I completed my junior year in high school. They wanted me to major in engineering or computer science. However, I was interested in social issues and in the humanities. I could have gone to the suggested field, but I would be miserable since I had no interest in it. I went on with a major that I was interested in. Therefore, it depends on the person and their interest when it comes to choosing a major. However, by generalizing that women are looking for an easy way out suggests that we are not intelligent enough to pursue difficult degree programs.

Furthermore, one of the disadvantages of being a woman in a patriarchal society is that her education, qualifications, and work experience is significantly less valued than a man's. No one can deny this fact otherwise; women earn less than men who have the same education and work experience. According to Eileen M. Crane, "the difference between the mean salary of female and male administrators was approximately $6,000"

(77). The salary difference becomes even more vast as the educational level and position gets higher. Why is there such discrepancy between female and male salaries? The only answer that comes to my mind is institutionalized sexism.

Crane writes women earn less because of two major factors: "The human capital explanation and the discrimination explanation (Madden 246; 74). Employers assume that women won't have the same work commitment especially after they get married; therefore, they invest less on women. However, this assumption alone shows that the investment in human capital has nothing to do with the low wages. It depends on one's sex in our society. If one is a male, then he is *almost entitled* to get paid more than his female counterpart even with the same qualifications.

Furthermore, the discrimination theory explains that women earn less because of organizational, cultural and societal factors (Crane 75). A woman's place is defined and structured by men. They have the control over women in terms of what they are supposed to do and how they are supposed to be. As a result it is obvious that they control how much they should invest in women. Work experience and level of education helps women to get paid more than others who do not have these qualifications. However, they won't get paid the same amount compared to men.

Now the question arises, how meaningful is it for us, women to get a higher education? There is no doubt that a higher education benefits women. Women were able to get this far because of education. However, there is still subtle yet equally effective discrimination taking place against us. "Only two females out of 23 (9%) and three males out of 20 (15%) who have educational doctorates remained in teaching" (Crane 77). This indicates that higher education is not as beneficial for women as for men.

Moreover, when it comes to career advancement, we have to deal with discrimination before anything else. Therefore, even with all the qualifications and education, we have to fight discrimination for our career advancement.

In addition, as in the classrooms, women are not taken as seriously in the workforce. According to Cutting, "Women are called by unprofessional names such as "hon," "darling" and "sweetie" in the work environment" (82). To me, it is a way to degrade professional women by calling them these names. Such names objectify us and devalue our professionalism. Cutting writes, "Men refused to do business with them because they were women" (82). The prime reason for some men not wanting to do business with women is that they don't see women as equal partners.

Even though there is a different attitude toward students depending on their sex in the classrooms, some students don't care much about it. They think that the male voice overpowering the female voice is nothing to be surprised about. In a study by Anne London, one of the interviewees even said, "It is a natural phenomenon to have a male's dominance in the classroom discussion" (244). It is clear from this statement that this form of discrimination goes on in the classroom unnoticed or when noticed, it is seen as the norm or labeled as a natural phenomenon. Therefore, women students are forced to be passive instead of being assertive in the classrooms.

According to London's research, "Graduate students were more aware of sexist comments and stereotyping women in case studies and examples, and of exclusionary language" (244). However, women who aware of it expressed that they just had to grin and bear the sexist comments. "I know it goes on at my work, but I just ignore it and do my own thing," said one of my classmates when I asked her about sexism. On a similar

note, "A woman graduate student in business said, 'you just learn to accept those things as part of life…you get to the point that you are inured to them and you don't let them affect you any more" (London 245). We don't have any alternatives when it comes to sexism but to let it slide by as if it didn't affect us.

The different treatment begins right in the household at childhood. If sexism didn't have anything to do with how parents treat their children, then why do they buy Barbie for the girls and GI-Joe for the boys? Moreover, little boys are pushed to be aggressive from early on where as girls are taught to be quiet and obedient and act feminine. If they don't act the way they are expected to act, they are labeled. Therefore, it would be naïve to say that there are women who have never experienced discrimination (sexism) in their lives. Sexism exists in our society; therefore, it affects all of us either directly or indirectly.

Interesting enough, people tend to think that sexism and any form of discrimination is only associated with people of color. It is true that people of color are the ones who are hardest hit by this, especially women of color. I happen to be conscious of women's issues because being a woman I am curious about what lies ahead of me. However, people ask me questions like, "were you oppressed?" or "do you feel like you are being oppressed?" when I talk about such issues. It is hard for me to understand why people especially women are not curious about what goes on in their lives. All women are discriminated against because we are women.

Sexism affects all women. It may work to the extreme against some depending on the color of their skin; however, it would be foolish to say that it doesn't affect certain types of women. If it did affect only one group of women, then sexism wouldn't exist.

Therefore, it is very important for all women to open up to their environment and be aware of what is going on. Women should not have the attitude of why bother since it doesn't affect me because after all women are women.

Aside from sexism, there are other obstacles women have to face while pursuing higher education. It is harder for women that have families to pursue a career or higher education. According to Mason, "Married moms said their biggest stress was from balancing family with work. They were mostly likely to shift away from academia: 59% compared with 39% of married dads" (3). Traditionally, women follow their husbands if their job requires it. Consequently, their academics or career is set behind. However, women in general are more flexible than men. We can have a career and at the same time have a family. I doubt there are many men who could fulfill this double work.

In addition, financing one's education is a big issue in higher education. Not everyone who is in higher education is privileged enough not to have to worry about how to finance their education. "In all types of institutions, women are more likely than men to be financing their own education" (Davis, Touchton 110). Moreover, women students are discriminated against when it comes to receiving financial help. According to Davis, "the greatest discrepancy was in federal work-study awards, where men received an average of 134% of what women received ($1,621 for men compared to $1,211 for women)" (113). Why is there such discrepancy? This is one of the situations where the federal government discriminates against women just because we are women.

Now the question arises, are we biologically (mentally) defective compared to men or is it the system that is making it harder for us to succeed in life? Obviously, it is the system that is preventing us from succeeding because the system is set up to favor

men. It is proven that women and men have different ways of learning. However, our educational system favors men's ways of learning. In the workplace, the expectations are such that we are put at a disadvantage. Employers neglect to consider the fact that most women have double duties. It is curious whether anything would change if the roles were reversed.

Whether we are talking about discrimination or sexism, it's about wanting control and having power over a group of people. It wouldn't be mistaken to say that men have been controlling women for centuries. They controlled women in any way possible. However, because of those women who fought for their rights, now we have more control over our lives. There are still some people who feel that women should be satisfied with what they have and not always try to out do men. However, it's not a matter of outdoing anybody; it is simply about our rights and what we deserve to get. Having control over one sex may benefit another sex for a short term, but in the long run, it is harmful for everyone. It is not healthy for a society to have one sex group oppressing another just for control and power.

Statistics and personal experience show that the obstacles women have to face don't have an end. We are discriminated against in every phase of our lives. Moreover, even after getting an education, we are discriminated against. So is there a benefit for us in pursuing higher education? Even though the benefits of higher education are overpowered by sexism, education can serve women well. Through personal experiences and higher education, women will have the opportunity to realize the difference between being a man and a woman in our society. Moreover, the freedom of being a woman and

being able to meet expectations at home and in the workplace by getting an education is a huge achievement.

It is unfortunate there are women students who internalize the false claim of them being less intelligent. As a result, they tend not to push themselves and mismeasure their ability to do well. If they don't succeed the first time they blame themselves and tend to give up instead of trying harder. They think that it is natural to have male dominance in classrooms, workplaces or elsewhere. However, reality cannot be denied, and it is true that women are discriminated against. There is no such thing as the natural phenomenon of male dominance in class discussion. Therefore, it is up to the women and men to mitigate this issue or we will end up embracing the false truth.

Historically, men controlled women's lives any way they desired. Women were denied access to an education stating that they were mentally inferior to men. When women did get to go to school, the curriculum was set up in such a way that it favored only men. However, women have come far in these recent decades. This doesn't mean that women don't have to face discrimination purely based on their sex. Women students' needs in the learning environment are neglected in the classroom. The old perception that women come to schools just to get a husband or to steal jobs from men is still very much alive. Moreover, the system doesn't help women get ahead. It favors men in many ways such as giving them more financial aid. Sexism that exists both in the classroom and in the workplace is keeping women back. We are not much favored and encouraged to pursue higher education or to have a career because we are seen as mentally defective. We are discriminated against in virtually every aspect of our lives just because of our sex. Therefore, it is important for all women to be aware of the

sexism that exists. Otherwise, we will always be labeled as the defective sex, and we will always be discriminated against just because of our sex.

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CHAPTER 4

WHAT DID WRITING TRANSFORM?

Introduction

According to the participants in this study, writing transformed three things: their sense of self, their writer identity and the way they write. What writing transformed varied according to the participant. Nine participants identified a change in all three areas. Two participants identified a change in their writer identity and the way they write; one participant identified a change only in the way she writes (see Table 3). The participants who identified writing as changing their sense of self made a deep connection between their writing and who they understood themselves to be. Most of these participants wrote about experiences they defined as very personal and private. Rendering these experiences in written language within an academic, public forum changed how participants made sense of these experiences and helped them to see themselves as the agents as well as authors of their experience. For some, writing changed their sense of self because of how they defined what it meant to write well. These participants saw writing well as a sign of intelligence; therefore, the more they believed themselves to be good writers, the more they saw themselves as smart.

Participants who I coded as identifying a change in their writer identities due to the writing they did in the course described a shift in how they understand and define themselves as writers. They attributed the changes in their writer identities mostly to having a new sense of writing for their own purposes. Most of these participants wrote primarily about political, social and environmental issues during the course and hoped their writing would make a difference in the classroom by changing the way other

Table 3: Descriptions by Participants of What, How and Why Writing Transformed

Participants	What			How						Why				
	Change in Sense of Self	Change in Writer Identity	Change in the Way They Write	Writing Autobiography	Writing the Research Essay	Writing the Journal	The Writing Workshops	Pedagogy	Classroom Environment	Made Sense of Experience/ Emotions	Got It Out/ Shared It with Others	Wrote to Emote	Broke Silence against Shame	Became a Better Writer
AnnMarie	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		
Brittney	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•		
Dan	•	•	•	•	•			•	•	•		•		
Julia		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		
Kirsten	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
Michael	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•		•		
Natasha			•		•			•						
Patty	•	•	•	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	
Preety	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•					•
Shane		•	•					•	•					•
Tina	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
Zackary	•	•	•		•		•	•	•					•

students thought about these issues. Many of these participants also shared their writing with people outside of the classroom in an attempt to educate them about the topics about which they wrote during the course. Some of these participants realized they liked to write through the writing they did for the course, and this realization prompted them to make writing a permanent part of their future. Finally, all participants identified a change in the way that they write. The intense focus on the writing process during the course as well as the ability to experiment with their writing changed how participants thought about academic writing and enabled participants to begin to define their writing process.

Change in Sense of Self

Nine participants identified the writing they did during the course as changing how they understand and view themselves which I coded as a change in their sense of self. Mostly they claimed that their writing made them more confident. They described this sense of increased confidence as having more self-acceptance, a louder voice, an increased ability to question sources of authority, especially in the classroom, and being less worried about what others think about them. According to participants, their increased confidence in themselves also made them more confident in expressing their ideas in writing and more confident in speaking up in class. Many participants described the change in their sense of self as growth. Drawing on emotivist and narrativist discourses, participants defined growth as an enriched, enhanced identity, the ability to express their emotions more freely, being more comfortable and open with others, being more outgoing and being able to trust others more, especially for those participants who wrote about experiences they had kept secret and about which they felt shame. Participants also drew on social constructivist discourse to describe a change in their

sense of self as learning more than one way to think and write about something, therefore, expanding their sense of self in relationship to the world around them. They described writing as changing their sense of self by changing the way they relate to others, specifically developing a deeper sense of compassion for others and more acceptance for ideas different than their own. The writing they did in the course helped some participants to see themselves in new ways, to see themselves as stronger than they imagined and as able to stand up for themselves.

AnnMarie described the writing she did during College Writing as changing her sense of self for many reasons. When she entered the university, she had just been severely injured in a cheerleading accident and was recovering while also struggling to adjust to a new campus. AnnMarie wrote her essays in College Writing about the events and people most important to her. In particular, she wrote about her injury and her process of recovery. She spoke in her interview about the change in her sense of self brought on by the writing she did in the course. She stated:

> The class made me more confident, like this is the way I am and I shouldn't be ashamed of it or I shouldn't be embarrassed or nervous about what people are going to think because people are like good people for the most part and they're not going to criticize you or whatever and I think that was really hard cause you're always like afraid of what people are going to think or say. Now when I look back when I first got hurt I didn't want to leave my house because I didn't want someone to see me in a wheelchair. Now it's like why was I like that? Now like from just being able to be more confident in myself makes it like who cares? This is it. It shouldn't matter.

She also spoke about becoming more confident in her writing and connecting to other students in the class through the practice of reading and sharing her essays during writing workshops:

> You know after like writing about such tough topics and then having to read out loud it just made me a lot more confident in my writing and what I'm writing about and it definitely made me a lot more understanding to other people. I felt

> like people were so good to me like it made me want to be like that to them. More open with other people, more compassionate toward them.

According to her, the class not only taught her to accept herself more but to accept and support others more as well:

> I think that's what I learned from that class, to not hold back really. I'm not going to feel ashamed of the way I feel. If it's a good group of people and they understand, even if you don't agree with it or anything, you should still support the fact that they feel that way. I think that's another thing you learn if anything, you learn how to support their ideas and the fact that they feel that way, and I'm never going to put someone down for that. I think that a lot of people have to learn that. Everyone feels a different way and you just learn how to deal with it. That's how life is. You learn how to hear them and be supportive even if you don't agree with them.

AnnMarie came into the course injured and ashamed and left the course more confident in her life, more compassionate, less worried about others and more accepting of herself. She wrote about "tough topics" and connected to others which shifted her sense of self.

Kirsten also described a change in her sense of self due to the writing she did in the course. She stated, "The class gave me confidence, absolutely. Confidence about writing and a certain amount of confidence about myself." An older, non-traditional student, Kirsten struggled with feeling like she belonged in the classroom. When she began College Writing, she had recently had a very negative experience in a previous course that had left her doubting her ability to write successfully for an academic audience. She came up to me after our first class shaking and told me she didn't think she could stay in the course because of her fear of failure. I spent some time describing in more detail the kinds of writing we would be doing in the course and the writing workshop process. Learning she could write about herself and choose her topics and would not be graded on her individual essays seemed to calm Kirsten, and she decided to stay in the course. According to her, College Writing restored some of her belief in

herself as a writer because the class offered her what she needed to write in ways that changed her. She stated, "It seems like I just needed a catalyst to spark me to write something that I had never written. It was always in there, but I just needed the right circumstances, the right conditions to write." Feeling more confident inspired her to want to write more and invest in her writing. It also gave her a sense of voice and the desire to question more. She stated during her interview:

> What the class has done for me other than give me confidence and just leave me with an overall good feeling is it made me want to write more. I walked into the class with nothing to say and didn't want to tell anybody it anyway. Now it's different. After the class, I want my writing to be good because I know it can be. I'm not going to be so quick to believe I'm not writing well. Nobody can really tell you how you should be writing and what you should be feeling, and I am going to be more apt to question things now. The class made me feel like I had a louder voice when I got out, and it probably made me question things a little bit more.

Kirsten began the course with a deep fear of writing in the classroom and experience with feeling silenced as a writer. Writing in the course gave her more confidence in her sense of self as she discovered she could write well and had something of value to say to her audience.

Similar to AnnMarie and Kirsten, Preety spoke about the writing she did during the class making her feel more confident. When speaking about the change in her sense of self, Preety focused more on the change she saw in herself as a student. She took College Writing during the summer, and she noted a difference in herself when she returned to the university that fall. She stated:

> That class helped me a lot. When I came back to school in the fall, I was more confident. I was like I can write, I can say whatever I want to, I can talk in class confidently and without thinking about what other people might think about my comments. Before I used to get self-conscious about it. Now I'm like this is my opinion and you might have different opinions but you cannot say my opinion is wrong. The class gave me self-confidence. The whole process of the course itself gave me confidence. It was really good.

During her interviews, Preety spoke of feeling silenced and intimidated in classrooms. According to her, the connection she made to other students in College Writing and the support they gave her as a writer increased her belief in herself, her ideas and her ability to speak her mind. She stated during her interview:

> I think we really bonded together as a class. We really got to talk about things and got to know each other and our writings. The feeling was there, like a comfortable feeling. It gave me so much confidence as a writer and as a student just being in a class and being able to openly express my ideas and thoughts and not feel intimidated by anybody. Because of that I've come so far in my ability to express myself and just be out there and be confident.

She also defined transformative writing as a process of growth and described the difference she believes writing in the course made to her. She stated:

> I grew in that class. I used to think if this is a topic than this is the only way to go about it. But now it's different. It was such a good experience for me. I think anybody who wonders what they are doing, I wish they had the opportunity to be in that place. It's definitely something that I value a lot. Because of that class otherwise I would have turned out to be a different student I think. I think that writing itself is really a growing process. You know how much you have grown when you see your writing.

Similar to AnnMarie and Kirsten, the course helped Preety to feel more confident through a process that included expressing herself through her writing and also sharing that writing with others in positive ways. Preety had a sense that the writing she did in the course caused her to grow by showing her different perspectives and helping her to discover her own, thereby, making her more confident in herself and her ability to speak her mind in an academic context.

While many participants defined the change in their sense of self as increased confidence, others defined the change in their sense of self in different ways. For example, Patty talked about the writing she did helping her to realize her strength. According to her, the most transformative writing she did for the course consisted of the

autobiography she wrote as her fourth essay about being raped by a former boyfriend. For the first time, she shared this experience with people outside of her sister and a close friend. It was also the first time she wrote about the experience in detail. The writing of her story helped her to challenge the beliefs she imagined others might have about her and to see herself in new ways. As an Irish-Catholic from a large, traditional family, Patty knew her essay about being raped represented her and her experience in ways that resisted the cultural constructs of conservative female experience her background prescribed for her. She also believed that the autobiography she wrote about being raped showed her readers that she was not permanently damaged by the experience, thereby, challenging many of the cultural discourses that often position victims of violence as broken and inferior. She stated during her first interview:

> Some people see me as this weak creature and I don't why. A lot of people see me as an innocent person who doesn't have a lot of experience with life. When they hear this rape story, it's pretty obvious I've had this major trauma in my life and I've come through it without having any long lasting effects. I'm not letting it hold me back anymore cause I'm stronger than what most people probably perceive me as than if I let it just rule my life. Writing the paper made me realize that it did actually come to a point where I did stand up for myself against him, and he is the major antagonist in my life. Being able to stand up against him made me realize that if I could stand up against someone who is that big and important in my life than I could stand up against pretty much anyone.

Writing her autobiography about being raped helped Patty to see that she did act to stop the violence in her life. While writing her essay, she shifted from seeing herself as a woman who allowed herself to be hurt to seeing herself as a woman who stood up for herself: as a woman capable of great acts of strength and resistance.

Tina also identified writing autobiography for the course as shifting her sense of self. She stated, "I felt like I had experienced something in the class, so I could actually move on in life and be able to tell my experience." She wrote her autobiography about

the breakdown of her family. When speaking about College Writing, Tina talked about the change in her sense of self as having more confidence but also being able to let go of her fear about what other people think of her. She felt shame about not having the "perfect family" and worried about how others would judge her once they read her essay. She also claimed during participant verification that being an Asian-American compounded her fear about telling her story because this part of her identity values silence. According to Tina, coming from the middle-class also silenced her. She stated:

> My mother is Vietnamese and my father is Japanese. With the silence I do think it has to do with my racial identity because we are known to be quiet and passive. I also think it has to do with social status also.

According to her, writing autobiography for the course allowed her to trust others more and worry less about how they perceive her and her experience. She claimed:

> Writing in the class made me a little bit more confident and not like worrying. I know people don't really judge me. I get worried that someone might think of me the wrong way because of one thing that happened. It's just something that happened in my past, and they can see who I really am. My past is kind of incorporated in who I am, but it already happened, and it changed me as a person. I wrote about a very personal issue, and I wasn't judged at all. I'm a little bit more outgoing than I was before. I'll open up more to people. I'm able to trust people more now and have them become closer to me without having to worry they might do something wrong.

Similar to Patty, the writing of her experience allowed Tina to let go of some of her fear about how others would see her and judge her. The writing also gave her a process to better understand her past and her future. The other students in the class who read Tina's autobiography responded in ways that supported Tina as she wrote to resist her shame and silence. Their support released Tina from worrying so much about what others think of her which allowed her to feel more confident when articulating and sharing her words. The writing of her experience shifted Tina's sense of self as she became more confident

in her ability to speak about her past and to represent a self that felt more closely aligned with who she "really" understands herself to be.

Participants who identified a change in their sense of self because of the writing they did in the course wrote about the experiences and ideas that mattered the most to them. Writing about such important topics changed how participants understood themselves as they used their writing to give form and meaning to their experiences and ideas. Of the nine participants who identified a change in their sense of self, eight of them wrote autobiography about life-changing events. The ways in which these eight participants described writing about these events suggest that writing can offer a practice that transforms writers by changing the way they understand the events about which they write. The two participants who identified a change in their sense of self not related to writing autobiography, Preety and Zackary, wrote about ideas that meant a great deal to them. Preety and Zackary described a change in their sense of self that had more to do with a shift in their academic sense of self: writing their ideas increased their confidence in their ability to express those ideas. As Zackary stated in his interview:

> I have more confidence in writing in general, in my ability to express myself, because I think that some people can have really brilliant ideas, but if they can't write them well, they don't go anywhere. I think that I can fairly well say what I'm trying to say and make it interesting. I don't think I would have said that before.

For Preety and Zackary, writing during the course shifted their sense of self because they connected their sense of self to their ability to write well according to academic conventions, and they believed the writing they did during the course enabled them to do so. As Zackary mentioned above, if a person cannot write well, they cannot go anywhere. Preety shared a similar belief about the connection between her ability to

write well and to achieve her goals. Writing during the course helped both Preety and Zackary to construct themselves as able to write well which means able to go places.

Participant descriptions of writing that changed their sense of self suggest that writing can transform how writers understand the social world because when participants described the changes in their sense of self they also described changes in how they relate to others and think about themselves as part of the world around them. Each of the participants who described a change in their sense of self connected that change to relationships with others: some in the classroom and some out of the classroom. This connection suggests that participants construct their sense of self in relationship to others and the relationships built in the classroom play an important role in writing that transforms writers. The participants in this study spoke of a desire to connect their experience to others and to connect to the experience of others which they used their writing in the course to fulfill. The increased confidence that participants described in many ways speaks of a better sense of connection to others as participants felt themselves more able to trust and feel compassion. The better sense of connection participants described had to do with feeling as if their writing made them better known to those who read their essays. The participants who wrote about experiences of violence also described their writing as transforming their sense of self by allowing them to represent themselves as more than victims. They used their writing to make sense of the violence in their lives and to write themselves as survivors who had overcome the consequences of the violence done to them.

All participants who identified a change in their sense of self due to the writing they did in the course described a shift from silence to articulation and from

marginalization to connection enacted through writing. For those participants who wrote about life events, this shift involved bringing silenced experiences into language and the public acceptance of a private event surrounded by shame. For the two participants who wrote primarily about ideas, this shift involved putting words to complex concepts in academic language and the move from feeling like an inarticulate outsider to a member of the academic community. For the participants who wrote about life events, the crossing of the borders between the private and the public and the personal and the academic also gave them a sense that they could more fully enter the university as writing and speaking subjects.

Participants who described a change in their sense of self drew primarily on a liberal humanist discourse and the concepts of confidence and growth: of becoming more individually liberated to speak their mind and to act in the world. I would also argue that they challenged this liberal humanist discourse by directly connecting their increased confidence as individuals to the relationships they built in the classroom. Liberal humanist discourse often positions high levels of confidence as the reason individuals succeed on their own merits. These participants seem to suggest that their confidence increased not only because of the individual writing they did in the class but also because of the acceptance and support they received from the other students in the class which most closely aligns them with narrativist discourse. These participants also seemed to attribute some of their increased confidence to their ability to recognize and respect multiple perspectives and to feel compassion for others. I would posit that these abilities allowed them to feel more connected to others, to respect their own perspectives more and to feel more compassion for themselves which led to them feeling more confident

and less afraid of being judged by others. The changes in their sense of self that these participants described would seem to suggest that confidence to be, speak and act in the world comes not just from individual determination but also from relationships with others that offer support as well as the space to express desires, emotions and ideas without the fear of intimidation or judgment.

Julia and Shane did not describe a change in their sense of self due to the writing they did in the course. My analysis of the data for this study would suggest that the writing of these two participants did not change their sense of self for different reasons. According to Shane, he wrote primarily to fulfill the requirements of the course and to communicate his ideas about mechanical engineering. Until the last essay he wrote for the class, Shane did not connect deeply to his writing, unlike the other participants who described their writing as changing their sense of self. The writing he did for the course transformed his writer identity and the way he writes, but his descriptions of writing during the course would suggest that he did not invest himself in his writing to the degree that other participants did for a long enough length of time to shift his sense of self. Julia did connect deeply with her writing, but, unlike the participants who described their writing as changing their sense of self, Julia did not write about moments of conflict, violence or pain. Her desire to write stemmed from wanting to write for pleasure; the other participants seemed to write from different desires that had more to do with changing their sense of self: to make sense of their past, to end silence, to emote and to resist familial, cultural and institutional discourses. Shane and Julia did not express a desire to write in ways that changed their sense of self, so they didn't. The fact that, according to these two participants, writing in the course did not change their sense of

self would seem to suggest that this kind of change may only occur when a writer connects their sense of self to their writing and desires to change that sense of self.

Change in Writer Identity

Eleven participants identified the writing they did during the course as changing the way they identify themselves as writers. They described beginning the course with a certain set of beliefs about who they were as writers and leaving the course with a different set of beliefs: all more affirming of their abilities as writers. According to these participants, the writing they did during the course caused them to feel more confident as writers and to have more confidence in their writing. Through the writing they did in the course, they came to see themselves as better writers than they imagined themselves to be. According to many of these participants, they had begun the course doubting their ability to write well by academic standards. Since the course, many participants claimed they are writing more for themselves and less to please others. They are also not as afraid to write what they think and feel in their academic essays. They left the course with a new desire to write well and the realization that they could do so, and two of them added journalism to their majors. Participants felt they were more open with their writing and more open to sharing their ideas and writing with others since the course. They also reported feeling happier with their writing, enjoying writing more and being able to see academic writing as fun since having taken College Writing. Finally, many of them experienced a change in their identities as writers as they shifted from identifying themselves as *students* writing to fulfill an assignment to *writers* communicating the ideas and experiences most important to them.

This shift meant the most to Brittney as she found herself more grounded as a writer after the course. As an older student, Brittney knew she wanted to work for environmental justice when she finished her undergraduate education. The writing she did during the course inspired her to use writing for this purpose. Combining her subjective experience and knowledge with her academic writing increased her confidence in her writing ability. Drawing on emotivist discourse, she described herself as writing more for her own purposes and from her emotions and feeling less worried about what others might think about her writing which she believed made her a better writer in many ways. She stated:

> I'm more comfortable writing about what I feel. Now I tend to write what I think, what first comes to my mind, what I first feel rather than trying to change it, rather than trying to change the words, so I'm more writing for myself now than I was before. I'm not thinking about who's going to read it and what they're going to think about it. I'm thinking about it as myself. It's become more for me than for other people. It is for other people. I am more comfortable with sharing my ideas, so I want other people to read them and maybe help other people to, but it's for me, and I'm not thinking as much. I'm just letting it come out. My academic writing is more like my journal writing. They're sort of from the class coming together more. It feels more fluid. It seems to make it better too. It seems to make it more me than it was before when I was trying to think about who I was writing for, and I think that's more affective.

She also described herself as enjoying writing more, playing more with language and letting go a little of her need to please her audience:

> I'm getting more into playing with different words. It's made me more poetic. It's really fun. I'm more writing what's there, and I'm not trying to be so rigid and structured as to what a professor would want. Because I actually do better when I don't think about that stuff. It's really self-affirming. I was trying so hard to please the other person and not thinking about myself, but I wasn't doing that well with it. I'm better at just being myself in my writing.

She found her professors responded well to her new way of writing, and their responses also increased her confidence as a writer. She stated in her second interview, "I've

become more confident in my writing too cause I've been doing great on my papers. My professors are like, 'this is very strong,' and I never used to be like very strong at writing." Brittney described her increased confidence as inspiring her to want to write well and more than ever before. She claimed, "I'm like obsessed with it now. I am cause I want to write very well. I really enjoy writing. I want to make it part of something I do for the rest of my life." The writing Brittney did in College Writing shifted her writer identity from a writer who wrote for others and abnegated her own feelings and ideas to a writer who has begun to write more from her sense of self and from her beliefs and emotions.

Kirsten also claimed she became more confident as a writer and more able to enjoy writing in an academic context. Having described her increased confidence in herself as having a "louder voice," Kirsten felt more able to articulate herself in writing since the course. This seemed to have lessened the pain she associated with academic writing. She stated:

> After the College Writing class, I refuse to believe that I can't write. Somehow I got the ability to speak through writing. Before the class, I was very stressed and keyed up about writing. There was fun writing and school writing and yes, there is still school writing, but now I'm able to look at writing for school as a little bit of fun. It doesn't have to be nail biting, agonizing.

When Kirsten entered the College Writing classroom, she had decided she could not write well, and she had convinced herself that she would fail at all her attempts at academic writing. Her experience in College Writing taught her that she could write well and have fun writing in a classroom for an academic audience. The writing she did in the course shifted her writer identity from failed, fearful writer to hopeful, determined writer: to a writer who now imagines that writing for school can be about more than fear and pain.

Similar to Brittney and Kirsten, Shane identified a change in his identity as a writer because of the writing he did during the course. Due to his educational background, he struggled a great deal with his writer identity. He came to the university from a technical high school and felt very underprepared as a writer. He felt that he had never been taught how to write and hoped just to pass the course. In his interview, he talked about learning to write as almost a metaphysical experience: a clicking, snapping sense of illumination. He stated:

> I learned how to write in the class. I can spit out a paper now that actually sounds like a paper. It just clicked one night with the last paper. Everything just like snapped together. I was just sitting there around four or five in the morning and all of a sudden something just clicked.

For Shane, the greatest transformation in the course came with the writing of his fourth essay, although he was not able to explain exactly why except to describe a moment of change. For his fourth essay, Shane wrote about his beliefs on the human condition: a radical shift from his first three essays where he struggled to connect the personal to his academic writing. He stated in his first interview:

> I was struggling for a topic I could write about with the last essay. I just kind of started typing and there it was. I thought it was really good. It was the first time I was able to sit down and write a paper and have it come out really good right there. Something just clicked. It was like someone just hit a button. It wasn't like a steady progression. I was getting a little bit better as a writer, a little bit better and then I made a huge leap, and it was just like right. When I first got the idea for this paper, it was like someone turned the light on in the back of the room, and I just started going. I sat down the next day and read it, crossed out a couple of paragraphs and then it was like someone turned on the light above my head. And it just kind of went nice. Two drafts, that's it, and I was done.

His last essay culminated a semester of gradual change in his writing which resulted in him feeling more confident as a writer and less worried about the value of his words on paper. He claimed:

> Until the last paper I was going through and getting a little bit better and could actually organize things a little bit more but still had no idea. I was having everyone else read my papers for me and correct them. When I gave them to people and they came back, there was a little less ink on them or they just seemed to work a little better when I read them myself. I would read it and it wouldn't sound like a total mess. It would sound like I was actually beginning to get my point across. I'm a lot more confident now when I type something out. I'm a lot less worried about it being worthless.

The descriptions Shane gave of the changes in his writing and his identity as a writer suggest that for some writers, writing for transformation may involve more than they can explain; there may be a connection between writing and transformation that cannot be articulated. The incremental differences in his writing during the semester were not enough to change Shane's identity as a writer. Until his last essay, Shane believed himself to be barely competent. He shifted from identifying himself as a writer who could not write to a writer who may have the potential to write in very meaningful ways in the space of one night and a series of clicks and light switches. I would argue that his writer identity shifted with his last essay because Shane wrote the ideas that mattered the most to him for the first time and witnessed his ability to articulate more than the mechanics of engineering. Having no restrictions for the last essay liberated Shane to write outside of the conventions he learned for academic writing which he had never done before and brought him to the moment he described as epiphanic: a moment that changed his writer identity.

Similar to the participants who described a change in their sense of self, participants who described a change in their writer identity described having increased confidence. This increased confidence consisted of feeling more able to write well and to meet the demands of an academic audience with less struggle. Many participants claimed that their increased confidence in themselves as writers came from learning how to write

in the course in ways that brought together the personal and the academic. Like Brittney, they felt they wrote better because connecting the personal to the academic taught them to write more for themselves and less to please others. Many participants also claimed their writer identity shifted because they now felt more capable as writers and identified themselves as good writers instead of bad, similar to Shane and Kirsten who described a new belief in their ability to write well. According to most of the participants, they began College Writing with the belief that they were poor writers and could only hope to please their teacher if they wanted to do well in an academic writing course. Their experience in College Writing taught them that they could do more than please their teacher; they could write to please themselves. Natasha was the one participant who did not describe a change in her writer identity due to the writing she did in the course. She claimed herself a terrible writer and believed that would never change. I would argue that her belief in the stability of this writer identity limited the possibility of writing to transform it. During the class, she expressed no desire to change her writer identity. Even as she claimed to enjoy writing a great deal, she also claimed she would never be as good as the authors she admired, like Toni Morrison; therefore, she would always be a bad writer. She had fixed her writer identity, and it did not transform during College Writing.

I understand the changes in writer identity that participants described as the shift from student/writer to writer. The participants who described a shift in their writer identity also changed their perspective on academic writing from an agonizing task they did for others to a practice that could be potentially "poetic" and "fun." I imagine this also shifted their writer identity as they came to see themselves, like Brittney and Shane, as able to write in "self-affirming" ways that have worth: as successful writers, as

confident writers. These participants seem to offer a discoursal construct of the confident writer as a desirable identity that rests on the belief in their ability to write well and to communicate affectively and effectively and on the practice of writing from a sense of self and with some pleasure.

In many ways participants constructed the subject position of the confident writer from their own desires to be able to say what they mean, to write about their experience and emotions and to enjoy writing: a subject position constructed by participants in many ways to resist previous positioning as writers within academic discourses that named participants as unable to articulate themselves, prohibited them from writing the personal and made writing a painful practice for them. The subject position of the confident writer constructed by participants also comes from the desire of participants to perform well as students. I would argue that because they received no grades on their essays but received constructive comments from the other students in the class and from me, they came to believe themselves capable of writing well; there were no forms of assessment that proved otherwise. They engaged in a writing process that allowed them to construct an alternative discourse to the discourse of academic writing they had been subject to for most of their time in school; they constructed the subject position of the confident writer from the discourses offered by the College Writing classroom. These discourses positioned all writers as good writers, encouraged the writing of the personal and offered writers literacy practices that made writing pleasurable for most writers. These participants also seem to suggest that writers construct their identities through their experiences with writing, and those identities continuously change as writers negotiate what they put into words.

Change in the Way They Write

At the time of the interviews, all participants identified the writing they did during the course as changing the way they write, primarily because of the revision process emphasized by the course. Participants reported that they did not engage in any sort of revision process beyond checking for spelling and grammar errors before they took College Writing. While most of them had abbreviated the College Writing revision process at the time of the interviews, they all reported a change in the way they write that included a more comprehensive revision process than when they started the course. They also stated that they are more likely to bring the personal to their academic writing since taking the course which they believed made their writing "more fluid," "less rigid" and "stronger." Some of the participants also reported that they structure and organize their writing better since the course. They believe themselves more able to write thesis statements and to complete an academic essay of which they are proud and to which their teachers respond well.

During her first interview, Patty talked about changing the way she writes due to the requirements of College Writing. Her past experience with academic writing taught her to exclude herself from her essays. According to Patty, if she brought the personal to her academic writing she received lower grades on her essays. Her desire to do well as a student forced her to leave the first person out of the writing she did for school. She spoke about that exclusion:

> I've never been allowed to write "I" in a paper cause it's a taboo word when you are writing papers. So I had to change my writing style to allow myself to be in it for the first time in like four years. None of my other teachers have ever said use "I" in an essay. Actually, if you ever used "I" or "myself" or anything that related to you as a writer, you got points off for that. My teachers let us talk about what

> we thought was going on but as far as the papers went, we weren't allowed to write what we thought about it.

She also spoke about the process of including the first person in her essays for College Writing and the changes she believed this brought to her writing. She came to value the inclusion of the personal in her writing as a way to connect to her readers more. She stated:

> I had to adapt my writing style to put myself into it. Here I was allowed to and I think that added more power to my actual writing. For example, if I had explained rape completely objectively without putting myself into it whatsoever, the essay would not be nearly as strong. People can relate to papers a lot more if the writer shows their position and makes the reader able to bring themselves to the work.

Patty and I struggled a great deal during the course over the issue of including the first person in an academic essay. At least once a week during class, she would ask me to explain my reasoning behind requiring students to integrate the personal into their academic writing; her questioning became a class ritual with Shane joining in with his own doubts about the value of the personal in an academic writing context. Patty came into College Writing believing herself to be a strong writer, and she questioned my authority as a teacher because I required her to include the personal in her writing. She doubted the validity of academic writing that did not conform to the traditional conventions she had been taught by her previous teachers. While she resisted me, she also wanted to perform well as a student; therefore, she met my requirements and included her ideas and experience in each essay she wrote. While writing her final essay on being raped, she recognized why I valued the inclusion of the personal as well as the transformative possibilities of writing from the first person. As she stated above, her writing became stronger the more she brought her ideas and experience to her essays, but the writing of the fourth essay, which she claimed transformed her the most, could not

have enacted the change it did if she had distanced herself from her writing as she had done until her College Writing course. For Patty, changing the way she wrote to include the first person and the personal opened up the possibility of writing for transformation. Through the writing she did for the course, she shifted from drawing on traditional academic discourse which denies the personal to drawing on a more sociocultural discourse on writing which values the personal as a way to write with power.

Zackary also talked about writing in more powerful ways since College Writing. He took the course during the summer before his senior year. He was a transfer student from a prestigious technical institute that did not require a first year writing course. He stated he had very little writing classroom experience and had developed a writing process on his own. During his interviews, he spoke about the changes in the way he writes and his opinion of his writing due to the course. He stated:

> I hadn't had a writing class in a really long time. I had classes where we had to write papers, and then I had my junior year writing class which was actually a lot of how to use punctuation and parts of speech, but we didn't write any sort of papers like long and elaborate but more short and concise journal type of things. In College Writing, I changed how I would go about writing a paper for the better. I used to write my papers one paragraph at a time. My process is much more streamlined, and I also have a lot more confidence in it. The papers I wrote, I really liked. I know I came out a better writer than when I went in. I'm more happy with what I write.

As an Environmental Science major, Zackary had a vested interest in being heard as he considered a future working toward environmental justice. According to him, his experience in the course caused him to value writing well as he came to identify it with being heard by others. He claimed:

> The class and observing afterward made me realize how important it is to be a good writer and how good writers seem to be the people who are listened to and for me that's something that's really important. If you have really good ideas and you want other people to hear them and you can articulate them well either written or verbally, it works really well. I think it's extremely important. I think

> that writing well can lead to success, to people listening to you instead of the person next to you. I don't know that I thought that before hand.

Zackary changed the way he wrote in College Writing which increased his confidence as a writer. Through writing for the course, he came to understand the importance of writing well if he wanted his ideas to be heard by others. The writing process of the course forced him to change the way he wrote by requiring a draft due at each class; he could no longer perfect his essays one paragraph at a time but had to bring imperfect, more complete drafts to class. According to him, changing the way he wrote improved his writing and caused him to feel more satisfaction as a writer. At the time of his interview, he had continued to write the way he had for his College Writing course. The writing he did for the course caused a discoursal shift as Zackary began to draw less on the discourse of the good writer he had constructed through his desire to perform well in school and more on the discourse of process pedagogy to construct his writing practice. As he identified his writing as improving through the drafting process taught by College Writing, process pedagogy interpellated his desire to write well and do well as a student and shifted him away from his belief that he needed to write one perfect paragraph at a time.

All of the participants identified a change in the way they write due to the writing process and requirements of the course. For many of the participants, like Patty, College Writing was the first academic course they took that required them to use the first person in their writing. According to them, bringing the first person into their essays changed the way they write for the better by making it more "powerful." While some of the participants had written multiple drafts for an essay before handing it in to a teacher, most of the participants claimed that their writing process before College Writing consisted of

writing an essay the night before it was due and handing it in without much editing. As Dan described, "I would just like tackle them and do it in one night." Writing a minimum of four drafts over a period of at least four weeks forced participants to change the way they write. The changes in the way participants wrote during the course precipitated changes in their sense of self and their writer identity. As participants brought themselves to their writing and invested in a more comprehensive writing process, they changed.

For the participants who identified a change in their sense of self, the requirement to include the first person in their writing seemed to open the space for them to write the autobiography and to do the research that transformed them. For Zackary and Preety, who identified a change in their academic sense of self, the changes in the way they wrote increased their confidence as writers within an academic setting which shifted their academic sense of self. For the participants who identified a change in their writer identity, the changes in the way they wrote caused them to become more confident as writers and more committed to writing well which shifted how they identified themselves as writers. As they identified their writing as more powerful, they became more confident in it and themselves as the authors of it.

What Does Writing Transform?

In the literature on writing and transformation, writers, teachers, theorists and researchers offer various answers as to what writing transforms. Emotivist discourse claims writing can transform the mind and body of a writer through expression of emotions; writing to emote promotes the psychological and physical health of the writer. It can enhance self-esteem and assist the process of self-actualization. Narrativist

discourse argues that writing can change the self by helping a writer to understand themselves as constructed through story. Narrativist discourse claims that writing can transform individual, cultural and collective stories. Through storying, writers can change their understanding of their lives, their relationships with others and potentially change their futures through writing new storylines. Narrativists also argue that writing narrative can enhance the physical health of the writer. Social constructivists believe writing can transform a writer by bringing them to an awareness of the self as socially-constructed. Social constructivists believe that writing can change the consciousness of writers with the hope that they will then act to transform oppression and the status quo. Social constructivists advocate writing for transformation as a practice to enact social change. Poststructuralists assert that writing can change the self by helping writers to become aware of their discoursal construction. Poststructuralists claim that writing may change the discourses writers draw on to articulate their subject positions as well as changing available discoursal resources.

The participants in this study drew on multiple discourses to describe and define what writing transformed for them. They primarily drew on the liberal humanist discourse that underlies emotivist and narrativist discourses. According to most of the participants, writing transformed them by making them feel more confident and more competent which aligns with the claims of emotivists. Participants also claimed that writing their autobiographies changed their understanding of themselves and their relationships with others which positions participants within narrativist discourse. I would also argue that although participants may not have directly drawn on social constructivist discourse, some of the descriptions and definitions of what writing

transformed for participants suggest that the writing they did during the course did cause them to see themselves as more socially-constructed, changed their consciousness and gave them a practice to resist taking up discourses they identified as undesirable and incorrect in their representation of their ideas, experience and emotions. For example, I understand the new perspective Patty gained through writing her essay on being raped as a shift toward a more critical consciousness as well as resistance to the status quo on survivors of violence. I would make a similar claim about Tina and the essays she wrote. When Tina wrote her first essay about the breakdown of her family, she did not identify her situation as abusive. Through the research she did for her essay on domestic violence, she read about verbal and emotional abuse and came to position herself as a survivor within the discourses on domestic violence. AnnMarie also offers an example of a writer coming to see herself as socially-constructed as she recognized how the social world had shaped her understanding of what it meant to be in a wheelchair and her shame at being marked by her injury as disabled. Those participants who wrote about social and environmental justice issues also identified a shift in their consciousness as they had the opportunity to clarify, articulate and assert their ideas and beliefs in writing.

Participants did not draw on poststructuralist discourse to describe and define what writing transformed for them; however, I would argue that some of their descriptions and definitions indicate a discoursal shift in their sense of self and their writer identity. When most participants described the change in their sense of self, they drew on liberal humanist discourse to position themselves as confident. In their descriptions of the change in their sense of self, they indicated a shift from constructing their experience as one of silence and shame to articulating that experience with a sense

of accomplishment, agency and acceptance: this is who I am; I am not ashamed of who I am; these are my ideas and I have a right to them; others may have different ideas and they have a right to them as well. By drawing on liberal humanist discourse, participants seemed to position themselves as having more respect for their ideas and emotions and more respect for others. In many ways, participants took up liberal humanist discourse by taking up the discourses offered by the College Writing curriculum and my pedagogy. The curriculum offered various literacy practices like writing autobiography and writing research that aimed to welcome the experience, ideas and emotions of every student in the classroom. I premised the writing workshops on the practice of students listening to and respecting each other as they shared their texts, and the belief that all students had valuable words to bring into the workshops.

As the teacher, I emphasized these practices and beliefs through drawing on emotivist, narrativist, social constructivist and poststructuralist discourses. Depending on the student, I consciously and subconsciously took up discourses that I believed most directly met their needs as writers. I wanted to make it clear that I valued the narratives, ideas and emotions of each student. I also took up the discourses I believed would most effectively challenge students as writers and as thinkers as they strove to articulate themselves. As a feminist poststructuralist, I believed I could draw on each of these discourses in an attempt to begin where students positioned themselves in the College Writing classroom. In many ways, feminist poststructuralism has taken up each of these discourses as it positions the articulation of experience and the examination of emotion as important to personal and political transformation. The College Writing curriculum I taught to the participants in this study offered them access to multiple discourses that

often challenged the traditional academic discourse participants had taken up as part of their writing practice. The traditional academic discourse on writing participants had taken up in their attempts to succeed in school seemed to prevent them from writing in ways that they defined as transformative because this discourse prohibits the literacy practices students described as transformative, in particular the articulation of individual ideas, emotions and experiences in written texts.

During their interviews, participants positioned themselves as more articulate and less willing to bow to sources of authority due to the writing they did in the course, especially those sources that had silenced and intimidated them before. I understand this discoursal shift as a shift in power. Through the knowledge these participants gained through writing in the course, they came to see themselves as strong, capable and smart. They came to see themselves as having the power and ability to say what they mean in ways that matter which enabled them to resist the institutional and cultural discourses they had taken up as their own that positioned them as powerless and silent. I imagine I supported this shift as a teacher because I did not assign writing topics and challenged participants to write what mattered to them even if that meant crossing borders they had learned lie between themselves and their academic writing. I spent a lot of time in the classroom and during conferences insisting that students had the right to write about their lives, to assert their ideas and to express their emotions regardless of the institutional discourses that proclaimed otherwise which students most often took up to resist my practice of requiring them to include the first person in all of their texts. They would often claim that the writing they did in the course was not really academic writing because they had included their ideas, experience and emotions in their essays, and they

had learned that this inclusion defined their writing as anything but academic. Whether resisting the dominant cultural discourses on survivors of violence or traditional academic discourse on writing, each participant who described a change in their sense of self described a discoursal shift caused by the writing they did in College Writing.

The participants who described a change in their writer identities also indicated a discoursal shift. Most of them began College Writing positioning themselves as incapable and inferior as writers as well as defining good academic writers as writers who exclude the personal in their writing. During their interviews, the participants who described a change in their writer identities drew on alternative discourses from the academic discourses that had defined them as unable and inferior. Similar to the participants who described a change in their sense of self, participants who described a change in their writer identity drew on liberal humanist discourse to position themselves as more confident. They described a greater sense of competence as a writer, a greater level of comfort and ease with academic writing, a sense of self-affirmation and less fear and pain surrounding writing for an academic audience. They each constructed a new writer identity as a confident writer which positioned them as able to write well and resisted the traditional academic discourse on writing they had begun the course with to describe themselves as writers. Their descriptions of the shifts in their writer identities indicate a more identified relationship with "schooled language," a greater ability to intentionally use academic writing to achieve their purposes and to inhabit a more privileged subject position within traditional academic discourse (LeCourt, 2004).

Participant descriptions of what writing transformed for them during the course support the discourses in the literature on writing and transformation. Participants offer a

glimpse of the power of dominant cultural and institutional discourses to diminish and silence as well as a deeper understanding of the possibility of writing to challenge this power. The writing participants did in the course changed their sense of self, their writer identities and the way they write. Each discourse in the literature posits that writing changes a writer's sense of self. The participants in this study who described a change in their sense of self would agree. Social constructivist and poststructuralist discourses suggest that writing can change writer identities through changing literacy practices. The participants in this study who described a change in their writer identities would also agree with this suggestion as they described the changes in their literacy practices as changing their writer identities. Social constructivist and poststructuralist discourses also argue that writing can change the social world. Many of the participants in this study described their writing as changing their social worlds, as changing the world of the classroom and as possibly changing the world of any reader of their texts.

The participants in this study most closely align themselves with emotivist and narrativist constructions of the liberal humanist sense of self. In many ways, they describe the writing they did in the course as transforming them because it allowed them to more firmly ground themselves in a sense that they could stabilize and proclaim a fixed identity. This grounding caused them to feel more confident and better about themselves. Much of their writing seemed to be about the quest to know their "real" selves and the "truth" of their experience. Social constructivist and poststructuralist discourses would argue that participant positions within liberal humanist discourse represent an apolitical stance on identity and potentially inhibit social change by affirming a unified individual self separate from language and social context. I would

argue that participants in this study suggest a different understanding of liberal humanist discourse.

Liberal humanist discourse seems to offer participants a language to resist taking up the cultural and institutional discourses that participants identify as oppressive: the discourses that threaten their ability to be Subjects and to speak and write from a place of authority and power. Liberal humanist discourse offered them subject positions from which to assert their right to their experiences, their emotions and their ideas and their right to include these in any writing and speaking that they do. It allowed them to resist the traditional academic discourse on writing as well as the dominant American discourses on emotion and violence. Most of the participants had experiences that felt destabilizing and challenged their sense of self, like AnnMarie's injury which completely disrupted her life. They wrote in the course to reclaim a sense of self from these experiences: to construct a discourse to resist the destabilizing effect of their experiences. Liberal humanist discourse interpellated their desire for a subject position of stability: a place from which to speak with authority about their lives. For most of American culture, this subject position requires a sense of self premised on the unity and coherence that only liberal humanist discourse can provide. Many of the participants had also experienced a silencing through traditional academic discourse which denied them the practice of writing from the first person: writing about their ideas, experiences and emotions. They had been taught that writing in an academic context meant representing the ideas of others, especially the ideas of mainstream published authors positioned as authorities on their topics. Through liberal humanist discourse, participants constructed an alternative discourse to the traditional academic discourse on writing they had taken

up previous to College Writing. By drawing on liberal humanist discourse, they constructed a discourse on writing that asserted their sense of self as a subject position from which to write with authority about their ideas and experience and to express their emotion through academic writing. Participants exemplify some of the important ways that liberal humanist discourse writ as the personal can be political and liberatory, can be transformative, for writers struggling against the silencing and shaming of dominant cultural and institutional discourses.

The Limitations of What Writing May Transform

While most of the participants in this study wrote and spoke about writing in college composition as transformative, one participant reminded me of the potential limits of what writing can transform. During her interviews, Natasha spoke about writing making her reality more clear, specifically her struggle with Bipolar Disorder. She also spoke about feeling like writing about her struggle with her mental health could keep her stuck in that struggle with no change possible. She stated:

> Writing about Bipolar made it more real like knowing that that's what I have. The more I read the more I saw that yeah, this happened and this still happens. My psychiatrist who only sees me every two months would say I don't know if you are and the next time he'd be like maybe you are cause the only indication that I'd ever gotten that that was the illness I had was when I was diagnosed in a hospital. So we just kind of worked off that and worked off the medication that they put me on there. Hearing him go back and forth made me really confused and I had no idea. Reading up on it and it just like gelled. I knew that that's what is was…I've talked about it so much and written about it so much it almost feels like if I keep going back into it, I just won't ever get out and that's what my life will be about and I don't want that.

The ways in which Natasha constructed her experience in and out of the college composition classroom suggest the limitations of writing for transformation. Similar to all of the participants in the study, Natasha came to College Writing with her own ideas about writing, the classroom, relationships, trust and her ability to heal and transform.

Audience was important to her as a writer, but she negotiated the writing workshops to make sure she did not share herself too much with other students in the class. For most of the class, Natasha wrote about topics she defined as safe. In her first interview, she claimed she wrote the essay about being diagnosed as Bipolar twice as long as required so that no one would ever read it in class. She shared only her outline of this essay in her writing workshops. According to her, she did not build relationships in the classroom because she felt she could not trust other students. She also stated she did not feel more confident as a writer at the end of the course because she believed she could never be a good writer, and she hated everything she wrote.

She did not believe she could heal and transform because of her Bipolar diagnosis. The dominant psychological and medical discourses that construct Bipolar Disorder do not speak of people getting well and being cured. They speak of using medication to keep a person labeled Bipolar balanced and functional. The discourses position the disorder as permanent and the only solution as pharmaceutical. Natasha did not have access to alternative discourses to challenge the belief that she would always be struggling with her mental health, medications and psychologists and with the potential of hospitalization if she could not function in society. Even when she did her research for the course, she did not take up alternative discourses to medicalization. She stated during her second interview:

> I don't worry about healthy. I don't really care about that. It's just so out of my league to have anything be really healthy for me anymore because I don't really know what's wrong with me in the first place. I'm not trying to get better because I don't really think I want to get better. It's sucks. The moods really suck. If I wanted to get better, I'd take the medicine everyday.

According to Natasha, the writing she did in the course was not transformative. She argued that it did not change her relationship to herself or to others. She did not feel

more confident even as she claims her "ego plant" grew a little. She tried not to bring her emotions to her writing because she believed that emotions got in the way of writing well, and she wanted to remain as objective as possible when she wrote. One of the reasons she claimed herself a bad writer was because she could not keep her emotions out of her essays. The writing was fun for her, and she enjoyed the challenge of the class and the writing assignments. She also enjoyed placing the research next to her personal experience in her essay on Bipolar Disorder. This essay allowed her to speak with authority about the part of her life that consumed most of her time and energy and shaped a large part of her sense of self. The essay allowed her to connect her past to her present and to write her story even as she shared the complete essay only with me. She stated that writing often made a negative impact on her, and she did not transform through the writing she did in the course:

> Instead of getting it out which a lot of people think is what you are doing when you are writing, it just puts more back in. It seems like it opens up things that I try not to pay attention to and then because I analyze everything it loops around more and more. So when I really need a break from it, I have to stop writing. The more passionate I get, the more involved I am. That's the whole problem. It comes out, but it doesn't leave. I could write about it all day but it will never leave, so I just don't want to write about it.

Natasha left the university after her first year so that she could focus on regulating her medication and strengthening her mental health. From her interview, I got the sense that for her the only change that would warrant the label transformation would be if she could be free of any struggle with her mental health. As long as she continued to take medication and see psychologists, she would not think of herself as healthy or transformed. When I asked her why she chose to participate in the study given that she did not identify the course as transformative, she stated "because it sounded like fun and I liked the writing we did in the class." Like all participants, Natasha's experiences before

she came into the class shaped her experiences in the class. In her case, they made it difficult for her to engage with the College Writing curriculum and connect to other students in the class. Her beliefs about writing, change and healing made writing for transformation impossible in many ways. By drawing on dominant medical and psychological discourses, Natasha obviated the possibility of her healing, especially through a practice like writing. She also drew on a discourse that positioned her as always a "bad" writer which further made writing for transformation an impossibility by keeping her disconnected from the potential of her written words.

Unlike other participants in this study, Natasha struggled with a mental health disorder that medical discourses have constructed as located in the body, impervious to non-somatic treatments and incurable. Within these discourses, people diagnosed with Bipolar Disorder cannot heal; they can only take the right medication to abate symptoms. Within these discourses, writing cannot transform a person with the disorder. Natasha's experiences with Bipolar Disorder and her experiences with writing suggest that there may be limits to what writing can transform. She challenges the emotivist and narrativist discourses in the literature on writing and transformation by arguing that writing does not allow for release but instead traps writers within the words that they write. According to Natasha, writing gets things out, but this does not allow her to let them go. She leaves me to question whether given the right setting and enough time, writing could help Natasha to heal and possibly offer her access to alternative discourses that construct her struggle with mental health in ways that do not limit her potential to be healthy. She also leaves me to question whether there are some experiences or realities that remain outside of language which writing cannot change.

Interchapter 4: Essay Four by Julia, Kirsten, Patty and Shane

There's No Place like Home for the Holidays by Julia

Mom and Dad always began their shopping early. Neither of them could bear to stand in endless lines of frenzied last minute shoppers. When they'd arrive home Saturday nights, our babysitter was told to distract us as they quickly carried the overflowing bags of gifts upstairs to the attic. My brother and I were not fooled easily however and managed to sneak our way past the babysitter to get a glimpse at the massive bags every time. Our hopes were always kept high, but we knew they'd probably fail again, buying us sweaters and socks, seeming to ignore each item we had on our lists. Still, we had faith Santa would make up for their shortcomings, delivering to us almost everything we could possibly have dreamed for. He would never let us down.

It was always the Saturday after Thanksgiving that Dad carried those ugly brown, beat-up boxes down from the attic and out of hibernation. They were piled high on the living room floor, not to be touched until the tree arrived. We'd all gather into the minivan, wearing gloves and hats, blasting carols from our Disney Christmas tape. Dad never forgot his trusty measuring tape and saw, the one that he insisted using instead of those that the farm supplied. The farm was a mere ten minutes from our house, yet the journey seemed endless. The search began immediately when we arrived, across the street from where we parked of course, because that's where the best trees could be found. Mom would point out ones she liked, and Dad would measure, as Jeff and I ran down the dirt paths. When Mom had found a potential pick, she'd make me stand next to it until she decided that it was the one. Dad and Jeff would saw it down as Mom snapped as many pictures as she could. We'd slide the tree into our van over the blankets Dad

spread to protect the seats from sap, and Jeff and I grasped the trunk tightly as we made our way home. The next day was always spent decorating. The mysterious brown boxes were opened and the lights, cranberries, candles, ornaments and other decorations revealed. Bing Crosby, The Beach Boys and Frank Sinatra's carols played as we sipped hot chocolate while decorating the tree. Dad would sneak outside to set the spotlight in place in front of the house and hang the wreath to the left of our front door. The season had begun.

Our December school days were spent doodling Christmas trees on our worksheets and making gingerbread cookies when we got home with Mom. On the weekends, we watched every Christmas movie we had on tape in addition to the ones being played on TV. Burt Ives's "Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer" was always my favorite. With our money saved up from Papa, we were taken to the Dollar Store at the plaza near our house to buy presents for the family. We were anxious to hurry home to wrap them all by ourselves and add them to the toppling piles of presents under the tree. Each day after school, we'd run off the bus making it home as fast as we could to hunt for any new gifts under the tree addressed to us. The smell of cinnamon candles and pine needles filled the air, and there was always that distinct feeling of warmth around the house. Not because Dad had decided to spend a few more cents to turn the heat up but because there were other more important things to think about.

After what seemed like an eternity, Christmas Eve finally arrived. Mom would wake us up early to help her clean the house and prepare for guests coming that evening. The set of Christmas mugs were lined on the counter for coffee and hot apple cider after dinner and Christmas bowls were filled with candy, nuts and pretzels. The kitchen

always smelled of lasagna, the meal eaten by my Mom's family every Christmas Eve since she could remember. Aunt Patricia always arrived early holding the massive tray of her assorted homemade cookies. She was followed by her husband and son, David, who carried overflowing bags of elegantly wrapped gifts into the house. Uncle Rick and his family arrived later and the meal would begin. David was the only cousin privileged enough to sit at the dining room table with the adults. The other four of us gathered around the kitchen table picking at the plates our parents had given us and then sneakily sticking our fingers into the chocolate pies set aside on the countertop for dessert. Sometimes Mom would catch us, but we never got into trouble. It was Christmas.

After dessert, the adults gathered around the coffee table that was covered by small wrapped gifts as a basket of numbers was passed around to each of them: The Yankee Swap, the most entertaining part of the evening. Each of them would pick a number and then, in numerical order, pick the present of their choice from the table. Aunt Leslie was never satisfied and did whatever she could to walk away with the gift she wanted even if it meant starting an argument. David and I would sit in the corner together laughing about our immature relatives arguing over coffee mugs filled with candy, scented candles and flashlights. David promised that when he was old enough to take part in the swap, he'd steal Aunt Leslie's gift away just so we could see her get mad. Then it was time for what we'd all been waiting for: time to open our gifts. The kids would sit around the tree patiently awaiting each gift being handed to us to open only when it was our turn. The aftermath consisted of a floor covered by wrapping paper and bows, which Dad took care of quickly, as we ripped open our new toys to play with. Everyone began to leave around 8:30, and it was time for Jeff and me to get our pajamas

on. A plate of Aunt Patricia's leftover cookies for Santa and carrots for his reindeer were left on the coffee table by the tree before we headed upstairs to bed.

It took hours to fall asleep, of course, and what seemed like minutes after we'd shut our eyes, morning arrived. We awoke ourselves at 6AM exactly running into Mom and Dad's room demanding that they wake up so we could venture downstairs. Dad went first and got the video camera ready as we stood atop the stairs with Mom. "OK, you can come down now," he'd say and we'd trudge down the stairs in our slipper footed pajamas peering over the railing at the piles of toys that surrounded the tree: my things always on the right and Jeff's on the left, our eyes wide with excitement. Santa had known just what we'd wanted.

Mom and Dad had to drag us away from all our new presents in order to get ready for church. The mass was always the most exciting of the year: our eyes fixed on the nativity scene at the altar and the children's chorus singing carols. When it ended, Mom would walk us to the altar to get a closer look at the manger and three kings surrounded by shepherds and animals. Each year we became more amazed at the realness of the figures and the way the altar depicted the scene of Jesus' birth so well, yet the scene itself was always the same. We were the ones changing.

Next, we'd return home to open the presents from each other. Jeff and I begged Mom and Dad to quickly make their tea and coffee that they had to have before we could begin. Their gifts to us were always a surprise but never as amazing as the ones Santa had brought. Our eyes would gleam as we watched Mom open the ornaments we'd made at school or the magnet we'd picked out for her at the Dollar Store. She and Dad always seemed to adore our gifts to them despite their innocent simplicity.

In the afternoon, we'd venture across the city to my Aunt Bev's house, my Dad's sister. The house always smelled of cooking food and cigarette smoke and was crowded by family and friends of my aunt and uncle whom I'd never seen before. Dinner was always chaotic. The adults crowded around the long kitchen table and the children sat at the small, square card table in the corner. We were always anxious to finish our meals because we knew a clean kitchen signaled the time for opening presents. Our families would gather in the living room, each family sitting together on a couch or set of chairs. Taking turns, each would pass out their presents to the other families and watch as they unwrapped each one. When we'd finished, Dad would place all of our newly opened presents into a big black trash bag and carry it out to the car to bring home.

After desserts of apple pie, chocolate mousse and Christmas sugar cookies, we'd say our good-byes and Uncle Mac would let us choose from his box of bakery frosted character cookies to make the ride home pass quickly. As we climbed into the car to leave, it always felt bitter cold, not because of the freezing temperatures but because Christmas was over.

More than ten years later, my eyes still light up and that warm feeling comes over me at the thought of Christmas. It's a time of pure happiness, anticipation and traditions to which no other can compare. In fact, living away at college has made me realize how meaningful the season actually is to me. Once solely anticipating Santa's surprises, I now instead look forward to simply sitting beneath the lit tree in our living room with family and friends. Time may have caused a few changes in our Christmas agenda, but our traditions will always prevail.

Driving to the Christmas tree farm from our new house in a nearby suburb takes three times as long as it used to but just allows for more time to listen to Christmas carols. Dad still remembers his measuring tape but doesn't bring his saw. "The one the farm provides should be good enough," he says. The good trees no longer stand across the street, but instead, on the side where we park. My youngest brother, Matt, insists on helping Dad saw the tree that Mom picked because the size would be practical. It seems so small compared to the trees we used to get years ago. I have to remind my Mom to get a picture of them in action, both on their knees with their heads together beside the trunk. Dad still spreads the same tattered blanket across the seats before we slide the tree into the van. The boxes await our arrival at home, and Mom insists that Matt and I begin decorating the tree without her as she makes dinner before driving Jeff to basketball practice. I put on the new Christmas CD I'd just made featuring Jewel, U2 and Coldplay.

I make it a point to watch Burl Ives's "Rudolph," still my favorite Christmas movie, at least once a week during the season. Mom lets me borrow the car to drive Jeff and Matt to the mall to do their shopping and pick up any last minute supplies needed for Christmas Eve. Aunt Patricia warns my mother that she's working overtime now, so the cookies will have to be store-bought.

When the Eve comes, the distinct feeling of warmth still surrounds us, but the setting is almost foreign. There was a certain coziness to our old cape-style house that made the evening complete. Rebecca and I are now allowed to sit in the dining room with the adults, and Jeff and Jeremy keep Matt company at the kitchen table. Lasagna is still the traditional meal, and the Christmas mugs, all except one that broke, still line the counter for coffee and cider after dinner. We gather in the bright new living room and

receive cards with money to buy something of our choice. Matt sits alone on the floor, all eyes fixed on him, as he awaits the gifts he has to open. David is now a veteran in the Yankee Swap and always manages to steal Aunt Leslie's favorite gift from her every time, just like he promised. Before bed, Jeff and I help Matt arrange the cookies and carrots on a plate for Santa and his reindeer.

Matt wakes us all by 7AM, attempting to convince us to awake and go downstairs to see what Santa has delivered, but Mom and Dad tell him to stay in bed for another hour or so to get some more rest. We drag ourselves up at 8AM and Dad stands downstairs with the video camera awaiting our descent. Matt flies down the steps when Dad tells us he's ready and runs to his stash of presents under the tree. Dad zooms in with the video camera on Jeff's face as he rolls his eyes and moves slowly to where he once flew. My gifts now lie on the left and Jeff's on the right making room for Matt in between. I look through my pile, smiling at Mom, signaling thanks. Matt is ecstatic of course, ripping open the toy packages and then handing them to Dad to put together. Matt argues about having to go to church when Mom tells him he has to get ready, but she assures him he'll have plenty of time to play when we get back.

The entire way to church I complain about how I wish we were going to our old church like we always did, but Dad argues that we didn't leave early enough. It takes too long to get there. This church has only a small, stark nativity scene, and I become bored quickly sitting among strangers on the merriest day of the year.

Matt is anxious to begin opening more presents the minute we get home, but Mom and Dad still won't let us begin until they make their coffee and tea. I don't complain because I need some coffee also. The five of us gather in the living room

listening to Mom's new Christmas mix CD, passing presents and laughing at our cat, Joey, who manages to climb to the very tip of the Christmas tree without any claws. We're all impressed with Matt's gifts to us, some of which are things he found in the basement and just wrapped up.

We head to Aunt Bev's in the afternoon for dinner and dessert, now buffet style because of the number of people coming in and out of the house all day. My cousin's friends, fiancés and their families now add to the already crowded house, some faces becoming familiar to me after seeing them year after year. Our gift giving routine is the same. Our family still occupies the couch in the corner, and Matt sits on the floor in front of us, but the process moves a little quicker. There are more envelopes filled with money passed around than gift boxes. Before departing, Uncle Mac still lets us choose from the box of character cookies and my decision between Miss Piggy and Minnie Mouse remains just as hard. As we put our jackets on and say good-bye, our relatives all wish me the best of luck for my next semester at school. They tell me how it seems like yesterday that I was dressed in my little red plaid Christmas dress with white tights and patent leather shoes. "I'd do anything to go back to those days of little red plaid dresses," I tell them, and we board the van for the ice-cold ride home.

The Table by Kirsten

I was raised by many people. My family is immense. If you sat my family down at a table it would take up the length of a football field. I'm at the head of the table looking for my parents.

The first memory I'm conscious of is my father being angry with me because I had just wet myself while standing in the middle of a sidewalk. Funny, I don't remember anyone being on the sidewalk with me. My father came storming out of the house and whisked me into his arms, taking me inside and directly to the bath. All the while telling me I was naughty and "knew better." I was wearing a red velvet dress. I don't know the length of time that passed before my next memory of my father.

My next memory is of my mother. I remember her driving me to the store in her red Dodge Demon. She drove me to the store so that I could go inside and get her ice cream, cookies, candy and soda. She didn't want to go in. Her paranoia prevented it. I remember staying home from school days on end and camping out in the living room with her. She'd pull the sofa out and we'd both sit there for what seemed like an eternity. I'd read big leather bound books of Shakespeare, not really understanding what I was reading. I remember the cover was blue. I remember I hung out with older kids. They were the only ones that took an interest in me. There was a girl named Lisa that lived in the apartment complex my mother and I lived in. It was in Sunderland. We had a game where I would run into her arms and she'd throw me down on the ice. One time I broke my collarbone and had to wear a funny padded brace for a long time. It made me look like a football player.

I remember a purple bike that my mother bought me. It had a big banana seat with a plastic straw basket tied to the front. I loved it. Sometimes my mother and I went on bike rides. We used to go to this market down the street from our apartment and get

fruit. It's still there today. One time, I remember my mother took a friend and me to see Grizzly Adams at the movie theater and then we went out for ice cream. We had a great time. On the way home it was dark and while in the back seat, looking at the headlights from the car behind us, I told my mother we were being followed. When we got home, she spanked me with a belt that was pink leather on one side with a flowery cloth covering on the other. She asked me how I knew that. I told her I didn't know, but she didn't believe me. That was her paranoid schizophrenia.

I'm at the beach. I love the beach. I can smell the sand, the suntan lotion, and the salt. I love the breeze and the sun is bright. I'm not afraid of the water, and I love to swim. I have a red, one-piece bathing suit on with a little white ruffle in front. A big wave catches me and I'm underwater for a long time doing somersaults. I remember it took a long time to catch my breath and get the water out of my nose and the taste of salt out of my mouth. Funny I should remember that now.

I have a wooden box with a little gold hook clasp. The top is almost falling off so the clasp is useless. In it, I have all the pictures my mother took of me. I have a huge picture of me in my crib, but it's torn in half. The missing half is my father. The pictures that remain show my mother and me in all sorts of places: Washington, DC, Boston, New York. I don't remember being in any of these places with her. I've tried so hard, squinting my eyes shut from trying so hard. Most of the time we're in matching outfits. I'm adorable. My hair is cut like a boy and very blonde. My eyes take up most of my face, and I always have a big, bright smile on my face. So does my Mom.

I used to play the piano in front of the whole school. I used to sing in front of the whole school, too. The only people on the stage were my teacher and me. I think it was my teacher. I was always wearing a pretty, fluffy dress, and I always had black, shiny shoes on. I have pictures of me doing this in my wooden box. I remember once, when I was in ballet class that the teacher put on the "Hawaii Five-O" song and said we could dance whatever way we wanted. I liked that day.

When I was very young, I called my shoes "vefs." This is what my Babcie (Polish for grandmother) and my great-aunts and uncles tell me. They also tell me that all I wanted to do was drink milk. I never wanted to eat. The only thing I would eat were the grape jelly omelets Babcie made me. I spent a lot of time with Babcie. I remember her cooking mashed potatoes, roasts, vegetables and bread a lot. Everyday, when the sun was still hot, my great-uncles would come in from the fields, sit down at the table, and eat what Babcie cooked off of pretty china with pink and green flowers. I can remember all of my great-uncles had a certain smell like dirt and grass. I liked this smell as much as the way Babcie smelled. She smelled like violets. My great-uncles wore dark green pants. What I now know to be Dickies. And they all had big brown boots that always had dust on them. I have pictures of them in my wooden box. I'm in the pictures, too. I was adorable.

I spent a lot of time at Babcie's house. I used to sleep with her in her bed upstairs. Before we went to bed, I always played at her vanity, putting all of her

"costume" jewelry on. Babcie always let me do what I wanted and never yelled at me. I used to play outside in the front yard with my cat, Tigger. When I was bored I'd walk across the gravel to the barn where my uncles were grating potatoes. If they weren't too busy they'd show me how the machines worked. I remember that part of Babcie's house smelling like dirt and oil. The rest of the house smelled like Babcie and musty rugs. I loved to sit on the gray tractors in the fields. My uncles used to leave the keys in them. The seats were shaped funny and didn't have any padding. The steering wheel was big and black, and I could barely encircle it with my arms. I had to scoot off of the seat to play with the pedals. I could never get the tractors to start up. I used to walk the length of the potato fields when the sun was going down. There was a long patch of grass in the middle of the potato fields that my great-uncle used as a runway. Sometimes, I'd see him taking off in his plane. He took me for a ride once.

My aunt lived behind my Babcie on the other side of the field and up a hill and then another field. Babcie used to let me walk there so I could play with my cousins.

My aunt used to let me walk across the field and down the hill and across the potato fields to visit my Babcie. I lived with my aunt for awhile. That's because of my Mom's paranoid schizophrenia.

My favorite movie was Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory. I remember my aunt let me stay up late one night and watch it. Once, she gave me a perm and turned my hair frizzy. I remember crying that day while playing softball. I used to love to play four

square with the big, fat red ball at school. I remember eating nothing but bread and butter sandwiches with ketchup in the middle at school. That's all I remember eating.

My cousin Glen was my best friend. I used to make him mad on purpose because it made me laugh. We used to get up every Saturday morning and watch "Super Friends" downstairs at my aunt's house. The entire downstairs was a playroom. I don't remember my aunt ever yelling at me. Glen and I used to draw all of the time. He drew pictures of super heroes or experiments he wanted to try, and I drew pictures of what I wanted my house to look like someday. I even drew pictures of the towels I wanted to have.

I remember going to Rhode Island and staying at my aunt's trailer at the beach when she wasn't at work. She had a green Pinto station wagon. We used to go there a lot. Glen and I used to pick strawberries in her garden. She paid us a penny a minute. I used to swim in the pool behind my aunt's house. I love to swim. It's late at night. Everything is dark and I'm awakened by the cramps in my legs. Before I can cry out, my aunt is at my side, rubbing my legs and whispering that it's OK. Years later, she would tell me that she used to have to rub my legs on the days that I had to visit with my mother. I would become very nervous and anxious after these visits. It was because of her schizophrenia.

I remember Glen and me jumping off of a huge sand pile in the fields between my aunt's house and Babcie's house. The side of it looked like a huge rake had taken sand away. I can hear my aunt calling our names to come and eat dinner. My aunt had red

velvet chairs and sofas in the living room upstairs and deep blue carpet. I remember going upstairs to watch my aunt change my cousin Kim's diapers. She smelled like baby powder. I didn't have much use for Kim. She couldn't run or draw. I remember digging up worms in Babcie's backyard with my aunt and Glen and my great-uncle. It was nighttime and my aunt had a flashlight so we could see the worms. She was taking us fishing.

I'm in my classroom and all of a sudden my teacher leaves the room. When she comes back in she calls my name. There are a bunch of men with her. I have to leave class and I'm embarrassed. All the kids in the class are quiet and looking at me funny. I walk into the hallway and one of the men points to another man and tells me that the man is my father and would I please go with him. There's another older lady with my dad. That's my second memory of my father.

I remember having a tape recorder that my father bought me. I used to record Spider Man and then listen to it again and again. I knew the Spider Man song by heart. My cousin Patrick and his sister Peggy and I sing into the tape recorder and then play it back to listen to our songs. Sometimes we just talk and laugh and record ourselves. And then we play it back to listen to our voices. I don't like the sound of my voice. I don't think it sounds like me at all. My father always smells nice and his face is always soft. He's always nice to me and never yells at me or tells me what to do. Sometimes, he doesn't know what to say to me. The lady that was with him at school is another aunt. I'm sort of scared of her.

I remember my father's lawyer used to eat her french fries with vinegar. I went to lunch with her and my father sometimes.

I remember seeing my mother as my father drove away. She stood in the middle of the sidewalk not saying a word. She just stared at me as I looked at her out of the back window. I don't remember the length of time that passed before my next memory of my mother.

I remember babysitting my stepbrother in the hotel room while my father and Helen went out to dinner. I barely knew my stepbrother. I remember going to school in Hawaii. The classrooms were carpeted and we could take our shoes off. The carpet felt good on my feet. I remember Helen's long black hair and when she smelled like beer. I remember Helen cooking good T-bone steaks and me making a salad for dinner every night. I remember crying a lot. I can still taste the salt of my tears.

My father used to go away a lot. He was always on his ship. That was his job. We used to try and talk in the kitchen when he came home, but Helen made me go downstairs. Funny, I don't remember my father ever saying anything. I was on my father's ship once. It was all gray, inside and out and had a funny smell. The doorways were like big ovals; you had to step up and over to get to the other side. I'm walking on the chain bridge from the pier to the ship. I'm trying not to look down. If I fall, I don't

think anyone could find me. The water is dark green and makes a slapping noise against the ship.

I remember Helen being angry. I remember always having to take the bus to go anywhere with her because she didn't drive. I was embarrassed of her. I hated it that she made me call her "mama." I was very scared of Helen. I hated school vacations because I'd have to be with her day in and day out. My stepbrother wasn't afraid of her. Helen used to go out of her way to embarrass me. I remember she let me get a tiny white puppy. I loved that puppy. Funny, I can't remember playing with the puppy. I remember Helen made me leave the puppy out in a field because she didn't like it. I left that puppy in the middle of a green field on a sunny day and walked away. I don't remember if the puppy followed me or not. It probably did because it was still a baby and didn't know anyone but me.

Helen and my father liked to fish. I can remember pulling crab nets out of the water and shrieking when there were big, black, spider crabs in it. They always threw the spider crabs back in the water. I went to an REO Speedwagon concert. It was the first concert I'd ever been to. I drank a lot of beer that day. I remember waking up in my room with bruises all over my right arm. They were from the paramedics injecting epinephrine in me to get my heart started again. Funny, I should remember that now. Helen and my father never said a word. I remember never having to worry about getting in trouble if I drank or smoked.

I remember the restaurant was noisy. Maybe it was more like a café. My father had taken me out to dinner because he was fighting with Helen. It was the only time that I got to be alone with my father. I remember telling him that I smoked cigarettes. I was proud of the fact that I taught myself. I wanted to be like all of the other kids in school. He looked at me for a while without saying a word and then handed me a cigarette. When we got home he told Helen, "and by the way, your daughter smokes." I hated him for that. I smoked in the house whenever I wanted to after that.

I remember I was a little late in getting home. I had gone bowling. I remember the belt Helen used to split my head open. It had a huge brass buckle. I remember looking at the bottle of Pine Sol that was in the laundry room for a very long time that day. I wanted to die that day. That was also the day I became a woman. I didn't understand it.

The suitcase is brown canvas on wheels. It has an ugly yellow and black strip around it. It expands to hold a lot of clothes. I can barely move it. My father and I don't speak while in the car. I don't remember what car he had at the time. The parking lot is dark where he drops me off. There are a few streetlights and a few of the windows in the building have light coming through them. My father said he was sorry and that I'd be OK. The building with the lights in the windows was juvenile hall. I was supposed to voluntarily walk in. I called one of my friend's mothers to see if I could stay with them that night. I can't remember anything after that for a very long time.

I don't have any pictures of Helen, my stepbrother or my father in my wooden box. Years after leaving Helen's house I used to wake up after having a nightmare of her. I'd be freaked out for the rest of the day. I rarely have those dreams now. I have never in my life dreamt of my father.

I was walking down the hallway when Judy told me that I had a phone call. Judy was my future mother-in-law. I loved her very much. It was Helen. She had cancer in one of her breasts and was going to have it removed. My father gave me money to fly to Virginia to take care of her. I can remember the day that my father took me to dinner to meet his new girlfriend. I didn't like Nancy because I felt sorry for Helen. I was very rude to Nancy and my father was angry with me. I think that was the first time my father was ever angry with me.

I took care of Helen for a week. She had a drainage tube with a little bulb on the end of it that came out of her surgery site. It used to fill with blood and chunks of tissue. I'd empty it for her making sure to be very gentle so I wouldn't hurt her. Helen was very nice to me that week. She told me how sorry she was for everything that she had done to me. She said she was a bad person. I've never spoken to Helen again. I'd like to talk to her today but I don't know where she is. I have a lot of things I'd like to tell her.

My friend Matt, Jeff and I are sitting in the middle of the football field. We drink a gallon of vodka and smoke a lot of weed out of a shiny metal pipe. I gave Matt's mother a black eye that night. She didn't yell at me.

I loved my friends in high school. Michelle and I used to write notes back and forth to each other in class. She and I used to go roller-skating and she'd do my hair and my make-up. She could make me look like a model. Matt and Jeff used to make me laugh and laugh and laugh. I don't remember what we used to talk about but I knew that I could say whatever I wanted and not worry about anyone getting angry with me. Margie and I used to go over to Cece's house and stay up for days. Greg, the owner of a limousine service, liked Cece and always gave her cocaine that she'd share with Margie and me. She had a red Toyota Celica that I loved. I don't have any pictures of Matt, Jeff, Michelle, Cece or Margie in my wooden box.

I met my husband when I was eighteen. I remember the night he came over to my apartment drunk, begging me to not divorce him. I was impatient with him because I was living with my new boyfriend and I wanted to go back inside so I could party.

I'm holding Kevin's waist very tightly. The helmet is heavy on my head. I'm in a lot of pain. He's driving the motorcycle very fast like he always does. I remember having to lean with him in all of the turns. We make it down the mountain, and I look up to see the valley stretching out before me. The night was beautiful and the valley twinkled like diamonds on black velvet. I had my appendix out the next day. Judy and Kevin spoiled me until I got better.

I take Duwayne's guitar and smash the glass in the TV set. He's very angry and cracks my ribs on the left side. There are beers and alcohol bottles scattered through the apartment. The glass table has white powder on it. I have to go to the hospital that night to get stitches in my leg and something for the pain in my ribs. My friends hate Duwayne. They tell me to get away from him. I have to clean the apartment with my friend Marilyn because I'm getting evicted. I don't want to shampoo the carpets or pack boxes. I just want to leave it but Marilyn makes me. The whole time we're cleaning I'm crying because I miss Duwayne. I live with Marilyn and her family for a while.

The water is cool when I jump into the lake. I look up to see Kevin about ready to jump off of the bridge with his friends. People have died jumping off of that bridge. Everyone in the lake cheers when they jump off the bridge. They swim to the boat, laughing. Marilyn and I roll our eyes to each other. There's a guy floating around in an inner tube between all of the boats trying to sell shots of booze out of a fancy black suitcase. Hours later, I look up again to see Kevin's friends driving across the bridge, honking and waving. They have to go home although we don't want them to. Marilyn and I get sunstroke that day. We are sick that night. The next morning we make our husbands take us home. On the way home, Kevin and I see an accident. A car has driven over the cliff. Later that night we learn that it was Kevin's friends. All but one was killed. I can't remember all of their names, but I remember all of their faces. Funny that I can't remember all of their names. I knew all of them for a long time.

I walk over to Deb's house from Marilyn's house. It only takes about ten minutes. She has a rope swing in her backyard that I swing on from time to time. Paul is getting the grill ready so that he can BBQ. Marilyn and Brad will be over later. The night will be filled with laughter and good music and no fights. I always eat too much because the food is so good. Gary hollers at me from outside to bring him a beer. Deb gets a phone call about a job the next day. The kids are running around the house chasing each other. I change the music and everyone hollers at me. I laugh and say that the music they listen to sucks. Rock-n-roll puts country music to shame. We all start teasing each other. The guys are outside trying to see who can eat the hottest pepper. Deb, Marilyn, Ronda, Carrie and I stand in the kitchen talking about what idiots they are. I can't remember how many nights I had like this. I was happy and not afraid.

I walk to Ronda's house from Deb's house. Ronda is Deb's sister, and she's just moved to Napa from southern Cal. Ronda always smells like patchouli and always has candles burning in her house. She spoils her children. Kitty pig comes in the house grunting because one of the kids left the back door open. Ronda and I chase her back outside, laughing because Kitty pig is annoyed she can't stay inside. Sometimes when I go to Ronda's house, I share my beer with Kitty pig. She loves it. I won't share too much with her; I don't want to have to go back to the store.

Marilyn and Deb are driving me to the airport. We chatter away in the SUV, making jokes and contemplating how many sedatives I'm going to have to give my dogs for the flight across country. I have a heavy heart because I am leaving these friends who

have been like family to me for sixteen years to move across the country so that I can do something different with my life. After twenty-two years, I am returning to the place where the memories I have consist of jelly omelets, books by Shakespeare, bad perms and picking strawberries. I am as frightened returning as I was the day I left.

My aunt is angry with me. I can barely acknowledge her anger because I'm nauseous and have a pounding headache. She has woken me up because she is so angry. I deny as usual that I was drinking the night before. I have frightened her beyond her ability to deal with it. She will not sit back and watch me kill myself. I came too close to accomplishing that the previous night. I am a far cry from the child she loved all those years before. I decide to accept her help (albeit in the form of conditions and rules) because if I don't, I will die. This is the last memory I have of drinking.

I sit staring at the computer. I look at the pages that contain memories that have made the biggest impression on me. The pages contain memories of people who have assisted in my upbringing. It's been four years since the day at the airport. What are the most prevalent memories now? Most of them consist of family. But this family is different. My Babcie is long gone as well as my great-uncles. My great-aunts are older and so is the aunt that I used to live with. My cousin Kim is married with children of her own: a far cry from the baby in diapers I used to know. Now, my memories consist of a new generation of family. They are as different as they are unchanged. But I treasure them as much as the memories I have from twenty-two years ago.

If you were to ask me who I am, I would say that I'm the person who people say is brave, strong and a survivor. They would tell you that I am funny, kind, sensitive and non-confrontational. They would tell you that I have a way of making a person see what they don't want to see about themselves. They would tell you that I am honest to a fault and understand myself very well. They would tell you that I love animals, maybe a bit too much. They would tell you that they have never met a person like me.

If I were to tell you who I am, I would tell you that I feel too much and think too little. I'm shy, unconfident and afraid of rejection. I'd tell you that I am serious and was forced to grow up before my time. I'm someone who's been angry at God and asked him, "why me?" I'm someone who has complacency and rage, nothing in between. I'm someone who goes to bed at night with so much pain in her heart she doesn't know how she'll go on. And I'm someone who judges herself too harshly.

But, thirty-six years later, what I am the most is a person sitting at the head of a huge table looking for her parents.

A Life Lesson by Patty

About a year ago I had an experience that I would not wish upon any other human being. Unfortunately it was reoccurring and after the first few times, it became quite frequent. The short way to put this is: I was raped. If you believe that once sex is consensual in a couple, it will always be consensual, you haven't heard a story like mine. I knew what was happening was wrong, but I didn't realize it was rape. I want to know the bad things in life. Seeing the bad from the good for what or who it is will not only

exponentially add to my knowledge of life and the world, it will make me a more complete person. If I know what is bad, I will know what I do not want to become. It is my pursuit of the bad things in life that often causes me pain. But without pain, is life worth the risk?

In order to understand where I am now, you have to understand where I come from and why the rapes occurred. Two and a half years ago, I was innocent and naïve. Then I met someone who corrupted me. His name was Andrew. I don't regret anything that ever happened with him. I know myself and life better now. He taught me things that no one else could have. Andrew didn't see me like the rest of the people I knew. He saw me as something more than the Catholic girl who would never even imagine doing anything wrong. Anyone who saw me as an angelic creature was wrong. I yearned to be corrupted. I needed someone to show me that life isn't sweet and simple. The experiences I gained in the short time I was with him have changed me in ways unimaginable to those who know me now. Andrew didn't treat me as a fragile being that couldn't handle being myself. I liked that.

The way Andrew looked at me was like nothing I had ever experienced before. When he looked at me I could actually feel the love in his eyes even when I was turned away from him. It was like sitting in the sun. With my eyes closed, the warmth of the sunlight dances upon my cheeks when I sit with my face toward the sky; it is a kind of reassurance. I feel as if the sunlight is God's love caressing my cheek. Even with my eyes closed, I can see the radiance of the sun and the brilliance of the heavens. When Andrew looked at me, I could feel the warmth and love he had for me even when I closed my eyes. A few months ago, I couldn't open my eyes or my mind to the idea that

someone who hurt me so much could possibly love me. It is, however, the people who are closest to me that tend to hurt me the most.

For the first time, I realized that life outside my town was different. People didn't look at your past and then judge you. Growing up was hard for me. I didn't really have many friends and I never dated. I didn't even know that any boy would ever find me attractive. Andrew showed me otherwise. From him I learned that I am not ugly and I am not fat. He also showed me that I don't have to sleep around for a guy to like me. For helping me understand those three facts, I will always be grateful to him. Unfortunately, for everything he showed me that was good, one dark mar will forever tarnish my memory of life with him.

Even though he was doing quite to the contrary, I know he honestly thought he was helping me. For some reason beyond my knowledge, I have never had an orgasm. I would always come close, but I could never let go of control. This drove Andrew crazy. He really thought that if I could just let go and have one, everything would be perfect. I was happy not having an orgasm. Just being close to him was enough for me. He eventually got to the point where he thought if he could make me have an orgasm, he would be happy, I would be better for it, and life would be great. The only problem was that we would fight every time we got intimate. I would push him away and he would get angry. The fights were so ferocious that it was enough to make me not want to be sexual with him.

The fights were often about trust. He would tell me that I didn't trust him, that I didn't really love him and that there was something wrong with me. I had never been in this type of situation before, so I believed him. I know now that it wasn't about trust or

love and there certainly wasn't anything wrong with me. In actuality, many girls cannot have orgasms. In some cases it takes over a year after first having sex to reach orgasm. I wish I had known that then. It might have saved a lot of fighting, pain, and suffering.

I came to the rationalization that he thought he was failing. In order to avoid him feeling like he failed and to dodge the fights, I soon tried anything to avoid getting sexual. The more I tried not to get sexual, the harder Andrew tried to get sexual. There is one example of him raping me that will forever be instilled in my mind. It started off like any other night; he and I went out to dinner then went back to his house. One of his friends would stop by and on this particular night it was Joe. He became one of my best friends over the seven months I was with Andrew. Joe knew he was welcome to hang out with us; he wasn't a third wheel, and some of the best times I had with Andrew involve Joe as well. At about eleven, Joe left because he wanted Andrew and me to be alone. I didn't want Joe to leave because I knew that Joe leaving meant Andrew would want to get close.

After Joe left, Andrew led me downstairs because his mother and brother were upstairs. Once downstairs, we started to watch television. He started to kiss my neck because he knew how much I liked that. At that point I told him I didn't want to do anything that night and I wanted to go home soon. Andrew backed off and it appeared as though he was fine with just watching a show that night. He excused himself to go upstairs and returned about three minutes later. He smiled as he walked across the room and jumped on top of me. I thought he was just being playful. He and I often wrestled and I didn't think much of him pouncing on me. It was then that I saw he was holding a condom in his hand.

As I was repeating that I didn't want to do anything that night, he was lifting me off the couch. I tried to push him away but to no avail. One of his favorite free time activities was body building and I am really weak. Also adding to Andrew's advantage, Joe was the New England Regional Champion in wrestling and had taught Andrew everything about wrestling there was to know. I never had a chance of getting away. Before I knew it, I was pinned on the floor and he was undressing both of us. I was begging and pleading for him to stop. I said, "No! Don't! Stop!" but he heard "No, don't stop." Eventually I stopped fighting. I just lay there crying. I know that Andrew really thought that he was helping me get over my "fear" as he called it, but this was not the way.

Andrew told me that he loved me over and over the entire time. It didn't help. He was hurting me in ways that only another person who has been raped could understand. It must have been half an hour before he finally realized that I was crying. He stopped and asked what was wrong. I told him that he was hurting me, but he misunderstood that too. He thought the condom wasn't comfortable, so he took it off and kept going; tears continued to flow from my eyes.

After what felt like forever, he stopped and in aggravation punched the ground next to my head. He stood up, walked away, and before I was able to get up, he came back. He extended his hand to me but I didn't accept. As I was getting up, he grabbed my elbow and yanked me off the ground. I didn't want him to touch me, but he hugged me tightly and didn't let go until I stopped crying. When I had cried so much that I couldn't anymore, he let me go. I immediately got dressed as I listened to him apologize. He explained that he loved me and wanted me to "get better."

It was about one or two in the morning when I finally convinced him to bring me home. As always, he drove to my house the long way. It conveniently went right past Bickford's where he would insist on stopping. He was always concerned with my eating habits and didn't want me to go home hungry. He also wanted to talk to me so that everything would be better in his eyes. He talked and I listened. He knew I was upset and angry, but I had the right to be. It was about three before I finally arrived home. I went straight to bed. That wasn't the first time something like that had happened and it certainly wouldn't be the last.

Months after Andrew and I broke up, I finally had the courage to ask a friend of mine, Julie, what was wrong with me. I told her all about the fights and the struggles between Andrew and myself. Julie listened to every last detail about my fights with Andrew. She said that she would go get answers because I was too afraid to ask anyone else. Two weeks after telling Julie, she gave me a scenario. At the end of the scenario, she asked me what had happened. My response was that the girl was raped. Julie then turned to me and told me that was the scenario I gave her two weeks before. Even though we were working at a busy restaurant, the air became very quiet and still. It felt like everything had stopped. Tears started to fall from my cheeks as I realized that Julie was right. She was the first person to help me realize that I was raped. I was so convinced that he loved me that I was blind to what he was actually doing.

The suffering and pain I went through once my eyes were open to the fact that I had been unjustly violated were worse than any other pain I had felt before. I questioned everything and everyone around me. Could I trust them? It took me a long time to learn to distinguish that relationship from other relationships in my life. At times I still find

myself looking at the world as though all relationships are that secretly brutal. I have come a long way from what I once was. A year ago, I couldn't talk about my rape with my best friends without breaking down and crying. Now here I am being open and writing about it. I believe the changing point was when I told Andrew about how I felt. He told me I was wrong and that things didn't happen that way. I was there; I know what happened. Finally confronting him and standing up to him has made me all the stronger of a person.

Although I have been taught to forgive the action, forget the hard feelings and move on without a grudge, I find it hard to do so in my heart. I don't hate Andrew. Hate is a strong word, and I know that hate is not what I feel toward him. What he did was wrong, but he wasn't purposely hurting me. There was nothing malicious about his mannerism. Andrew just heard something that I didn't say and was trying to "fix" something that wasn't "broken." The idea that he thought he was helping is what prevents me from hating him.

The scary truth is: I will never stop loving Andrew. At one point in my life I was in love with him. I fell out of love but I can't stop loving him. If you love someone once, and I mean really love them, then you will love them always. Or at least this is true to me. I know he still loves me. After everything I have said and everything I have done, I can still look into his eyes and see the love that he has always had for me.

Most of the trauma that has happened in my life occurred in that relationship. It is funny how the trauma has made me who and what I am. A sentiment I believe is that a person will grow to be like their primary caregiver. I also believe that a person is raised by whomever they are with. Parents and family are the traditional caregivers, but it is

friends who are the primary caregivers. I am with my friends a great deal more than my family. I look to my family members as role models, but I look to my friends as examples. I know that I am still being raised. If you believe you are not still being raised: is it not true that life is a lesson, and that we learn the lesson all the way through life? It is funny that the trauma has molded me because I do not believe that I am a bad person, although I was taught a life lesson in a rather harsh manner.

Life isn't simple; it certainly isn't sweet, but everything happens for a reason. The searching for the reason that I was raped escapes me. However, I refuse to cry any longer and I will not continue to ask God the elusive "why me?" Do I ask for your pity? No, I don't ask for that any longer. Maybe the reason that I was raped was to make me a stronger person. Or perhaps I was raped so that in the future I will be able recognize certain dangerous characteristics in the people around me. I look forward to the day that my experience is put to the test and perhaps find that perfect someone. My heart tells me that for every person on earth, there is one other that is a perfect match. Every unsuccessful attempt to find this someone is a lesson which we must learn so that when that someone comes, we are prepared. Very few people will find this special someone, but the lucky few that do find the real thing, it opens their eyes and their hearts to worlds only dreamers can fathom. I'll use what I know to find and keep that special someone one day.

I don't ask for your pity or your sympathy. Most people say that they are sorry when I tell them. It is nothing that anyone needs to be sorry for. It happened to me and me alone. I don't expect anyone to suffer along with me. However, I do recognize that I have punished people in my life for exhibiting habits that I once saw Andrew exhibit.

For that, I am sorry. I still struggle getting truly personal with people in my life and I often treat some people badly for mistakes they haven't made.

I don't cry anymore. My life is getting better by the day. I have been able to move on, although the progress is at times slow and tedious, and I have been able to talk openly about this for the first time. I want those who have never been exposed to rape to know about it. I kept it a secret for a long time. Not only did that secret keep me from being more personal with my friends, it kept me from getting close to anyone. Once again, I would like to repeat that by no means do I regret being with Andrew. He may have been the best thing but also the worst thing that ever happened to me. He made me strong for the struggles that lay ahead. Life is going to be alright; I know that now. One day I hope to look back upon this and smile. Life is a lesson, and at 20 years of age, I have been taught more than I ever imagined possible.

The Blind to All That Is by Shane

We are but men: who are we to decide who lives and who dies? What is just and what is not? Are we as humans so arrogant that we honestly feel that we can obtain enough knowledge in the short amount of time we are alive to decide who deserves to live and die? Who is worth saving and who isn't? Or maybe even what is and is not worth fighting for, killing for? We as humans are naïve enough to truly believe that fighting solves the world's problems. Some may argue otherwise, but if we didn't believe, then why would we continue fighting?

The president claims we are fighting a war on terrorism. He says that terrorists have unjustly attacked (9/11) our home, our freedom, and our way of life. We are not fighting terrorism, we are fighting ourselves. It is because of our naïve negligence that

we were attacked. This was not a spontaneous attack; it was a well planned counter attack in rebellion to our attacks on countries around the globe. We as a super power feel the need to police the globe, and take other's matters into our own hands thinking that by bringing in our force, our infinite wisdom, we will solve other's problems.

Since man came to be, all we have known is violence. The human race as it seems is a naturally aggressive species. In fact, it is probably safe to say that the human race is the most aggressive species on the planet. We as humans do not create equilibrium with our surroundings as all other mammals on this planet do. Instead, we multiply and consume at such vast rates that we are now forced to find alternatives to many things. Fossil fuels will be depleted in the very near future, which means the plastics and fuels that are used in our everyday lives will be gone forever.

Since our very first days where we wandered the earth as cavemen, we've resorted to nothing but violence in order to get what we want. In Jesus' day people were stoned to death for their crimes. Now people are thrown in prison where they are raped, murdered, beat on or await a death sentence. Or on the outside of the prison walls, in our very own streets and houses, wives are beaten, children are molested, and people murdered. How can we as a species wage mindless, tragic wars on other people that are half way around the world when we can't even solve the problems in our own homes? Do we wage war to help ease our craving for conflict, to soothe this aggressive nature of ours?

What is it we're fighting for? Some like to say we fight for peace, others domination. How can peace be achieved by using force and starting wars? People cannot be forced to get along; they cannot be forced into peace. Instead people must

open their eyes to the world. Once one's eyes have been opened, they are enlightened; they realize that the use of force and war shall never solve a thing. All war can and will do is bring about our demise, our forever extinction. People for some odd reason are born blind. We naturally and quite willingly allow ourselves to be led by our aggression rather than our mind. It is this aggression-leading state of mind that creates these atrocities we seem to be witnessing on a regular basis. Atrocities such as the one on 9/11 and the Holocaust shall forever be repeated unless the world's eyes are opened.

The human race, as it seems, is unable to view the world clearly. For if one was to view the world clearly, they would not see the fighting and killing we all see today. Instead one would see that the world is not to be conquered, but rather is to be cherished and utilized. People have forever been looking for ways to save the world. What people don't realize is the world is not to be saved, we are.

Is there a shred of hope left for us? If there is a hope, that hope is surely communication. Communication is our most lethal yet misused tool in our fight for peace and equilibrium. The power of speech shall never be topped, nor shall it even be matched. It is through speech that empires erupt from ruins or go from godliness to mere ashes. One can change the tides of the world with mere words. Words cannot be simply thrown around; speech must be mastered, for it is when the wrong words are used or misdirected that all that has been accomplished is undone. Speech is like creating a quilt. The quilter must use the right material for when the wrong materials are used, or there is a flaw, the quilt tears and decomposes into a pile of thread and fabric.

It is with the power of speech that we might be saved. With the power of speech comes, however, great risk. Speech can perhaps be directed toward malicious ideas more

easily than applied to helping. This can be seen through our past. Jesus brought worlds together with his words, yet it was another that tore these worlds apart and sent Jesus to his resurrection. In the days of Hitler, he transformed a country of ruins; he built those ruins into an empire. Speech saved us, for it brought together many nations in an effort to stand up to this empire and stop its unimaginable horrors.

Before we can hope to be saved, we must first open our eyes and forgive. Complete and untainted forgiveness must be instilled before even a glimpse of hope will be seen. It is, however, with time that this may begin to happen. Time heals all; it's just a matter of how much time, but in the end we all shall see. In the end, the end of this aggression-driven society, we shall be reborn. With our rebirth, our eyes will be opened. It is when our eyes are opened that we will see the world: the pointless, ignorant, aggression-driven world. With this, one will see for perhaps the first time, what their life was, is, and what it shall be. If one's life was a life of hate, they shall quickly shed that life and be reborn into a new life: a life of forgiveness and wisdom.

We as humans will and are saved upon our rebirth. Once reborn, our arrogant, naïve ways shall be cast off and the world will save us as we save each other. For it is the world that spawned us, gave us what we have and allows us to continue. The world sees that a rare few have been reborn and enlightened; it is with these few that we shall be made aware and saved. Life is what one makes it; why make it as we have? Life instead should be embraced and cherished. Why not see just how much we can make of life rather than taking life and wasting it?

CHAPTER 5

HOW DID WRITING TRANSFORM?

Students sit at their desks writing in their journals. It is the beginning of class, and they have fifteen minutes to write about anything they want in anyway they want. No one will ever read their journal unless they choose to share it because even though I have assigned the journal, it does not get read in class or passed in for a grade. The minutes end, and they put away their journals and take out the second draft of their first essay for the course. I remind them that today is a writing workshop day, and they look around the classroom and find the students from their workshop group from the previous class. Moving their desks together, they anticipate reading their essays aloud. Four students make it to the corner of the classroom. They have clustered their desks in a square-like circle and moved as far away as possible from the other five groups in the room so they can hear each other better over the voices of the other students. Each of them clutches their essay in front of them trying to decide who will read theirs first. It is the third week of class, and they are still shy with each other and wary of sharing their writing with almost strangers. They decide they will work around the circle one essay at a time and give comments to each reader. One of the women in the group offers to begin. She has written her autobiography about her first day of school at the university. She starts to read with a shaky voice that slowly becomes steady as she gets into the rhythm of her words. The other students in her group listen. Her story causes them to laugh in some places and to say, "me too." She finishes reading her five pages and looks up at the students in her group with expectation. They each respond to the content of her essay with initial reactions born of connection and emotional response. They then turn to the questions I have written on the board and include their answers to them in their comments on her essay. When they have finished with their feedback, she asks a few questions of her own. They then turn to the next student in the circle as he begins to read. As the teacher, I wander the classroom listening to students read their essays and offer each other comments and suggestions. I add a few of my own and answer some questions. Each student shares their essay and receives comments on their writing. The workshop lasts for the whole class. Students leave the classroom talking about their intended revisions for their next draft and the World Series. As a class, we have begun to construct our classroom context and the writing process we will practice for the semester. I pack up my books and walk out with a student who wonders why we write autobiography in a course designed to prepare him to write for college.

Introduction

Writing in the College Writing classroom transformed participants for many reasons. Participants identified multiple literacy practices offered by the curriculum as transformative as well as the classroom environment and the way I taught the course (see Table 3). The process of transformation was complex, and participants drew on multiple

discourses to construct their understanding of how writing transformed them. The literacy practices that transformed participants connected to the changes that participants identified in their sense of self, their writer identities and the way they write. Primarily, when participants identified a change in their sense of self, they described literacy practices that involved the articulation and representation of the self as transformative. When participants identified a change in their writer identity or the way they write, they defined literacy practices that emphasized the articulation and representation of ideas as transformative. All participants found aspects of College Writing that met their needs and desires which contributed to their ability to write in transformative ways.

While participants defined many of the same literacy practices as transformative, each took up the College Writing curriculum in distinctive ways so that each literacy practice took on a singular texture depending on the participant. For example, Dan took up emotivist discourse to describe writing autobiography as transformative because it enabled him to emote; whereas, Kirsten mostly positioned herself within narrativist discourse to describe writing autobiography as transformative because she wrote to get her story out into the world. Even as they found the same literacy practice of writing autobiography in the course transformative, they each had different desires as writers so that the same literacy practice transformed them for different reasons. The differences among participant descriptions of transformative literacy practices seem to suggest that the College Writing curriculum transformed the participants in this study in some ways by offering them access to multiple discourses on the same literacy practices, therefore, allowing them to shape the literacy practices to meet their desires.

The College Writing Curriculum

The College Writing curriculum offered participants multiple literacy practices to write for transformation. Participants identified these literacy practices as writing autobiography, writing research, writing in the journal and writing workshops. Each participant named several literacy practices as transformative and defined a mixture of literacy practices as important to writing for transformation. Participants also defined the drafting and revising process as a transformative literacy practice. Each of the literacy practices gave participants the ability to choose their writing topics, to make decisions as a writer and to experiment and explore. Each literacy practice also connected the personal to academic writing. Because participants came to their College Writing class with the desire to write their experience, ideas and emotions, the aspects of the curriculum which emphasized this practice became transformative for participants. Each of the literacy practices that participants defined as transformative required the crossing of the border between the private and the public and the personal and the academic and gave participants the opportunity to end their silences about their experience, to bring their ideas into an academic context and to express their emotions. All of the literacy practices, except writing in the journal, also offered participants the chance to share their experience, ideas and emotions with other students in the classroom.

During her interview, Brittney described how the College Writing curriculum pushed her to write and share her writing. As a prolific journal writer, Brittney had written in ways that changed her before College Writing. The class offered her the space to do so within an academic setting. By drawing on emotivist discourse, she described the curriculum as transformative because the writing assignments made it seem

acceptable to write and share the emotions, issues and ideas she traditionally dealt with on a more personal level:

> I think the class made me more confident in expressing my ideas by forcing me to write about things I wouldn't normally write about or I would but not share with other people to read. And by making it seem like it was alright to write about those things. More emotions, more feelings, more like about growth and all that stuff that I do on a more personal level than I do on a writing level.

Through a social constructivist discourse that connects having power with language to having power in the world, she claimed that the kind of writing she did for the course positioned her as a "definer" of ideas: as a writer who can find the "right words" and write with more confidence. She found the consistent writing required by the College Writing curriculum provided her with the focused practice she needed to begin to define her ideas and understand her emotions which caused her to feel more powerful as a writer. She stated:

> I feel like you're kind of defining those ideas too because in order to write about them you have to define them because there are a lot of things I want to write about and talk about, but I can't because I can't define them or find the right words but when you do it all the time, when you're constantly working at it, you can start to do it so that makes you feel more confident and makes you understand more of what you are feeling too. So other people can understand it and you can share it with other people. Defining it, defining those feelings makes the writing more powerful and gives you more energy too and more confidence.

Brittney had learned to separate the personal from the academic in her writing by taking up traditional academic discourse previous to College Writing. This separation taught her to feel embarrassment at exposing her ideas and emotions to others in the classroom. She struggled with sharing her writing with the other students in the class even as she identified this sharing as a transformative aspect of the course. She claimed, "I didn't want to share, but it was like getting over something. Getting over being embarrassed, getting over that, just do it. It was like good for me." By crossing the

border between the personal and the academic through the College Writing curriculum, Brittney transformed her sense of self as well as her writer identity. She started to feel less shame about her experience and emotions and more confident in her ideas and the writing of those ideas.

Zackary described the writing process of the course as encouraging intellectual discovery. He defined this process as transformative because it allowed him to feel like he knew more and could articulate his ideas in writing better. For him, writing the personal had to do with bringing his ideas into academic writing. According to him, he had been taught to appear objective in his essays and to write primarily for argumentation. He found the writing he did for the course transformative because it allowed him to explore his ideas and pushed him to learn about himself, his thoughts and beliefs. He also had a sense that the kind of writing he did in the course could enact change. He stated:

> The papers I really enjoyed were the ones where I could take something that I thought and try to not necessarily convince somebody else but point out how I thought. I think you can change the world and change people if you can write like that. The papers forced you to think and figure something out about either yourself or about how you see something or how you feel about something so if you've never actually thought about it you might sort of know but actually how do I really think about it now that I have to write an autobiography or something like that.

To describe the importance of the writing he did in the course, Zackary drew on a public discourse that positions writing well as the purview of smart people: a discourse which fuses intelligence with the ability to perform well according to academic conventions. He stated in his interview:

> I want to not sound dumb. It's more formal when you write it down so you better not be wrong. Anybody can just blab on about something and it doesn't have to be right, but if you're writing it down, it seems like it should be smart; writing's for smart people.

Zackary defined the College Writing curriculum as transformative because the writing he did in the course caused him to feel like he could write well, therefore, position himself as a smart person: as a writer who does not "sound dumb." Through the exploration of his ideas on paper he came to understand himself as intelligent and more articulate than he imagined when he began the course which fulfilled his desire to be able to represent himself as smart.

Taking up emotivist discourse, Dan identified the College Writing curriculum as transformative because he felt it offered him the freedom to express himself which released his passion for writing. One way he used this freedom was to emote. He stated during his second interview:

> I had never really enjoyed an English class, a writing class before, and I liked writing the essays most of the time. It was more fun than a chore. I picked up a passion for it when I wrote my first one. As soon as I started getting my emotions out, it came real easily, and I wanted to finish it and then I just followed that and I kept writing.

He described the different genres offered by the College Writing curriculum and how each impacted his writing process. He also described how the ability to experiment shaped the transformative writing he did during the course:

> I saw the text-wrestling essay like, "you have to write about this essay in this book." I think that if every assignment was like that I would have just done every essay like that and just gone through the motions. And I wouldn't be here right now. I think the open-ended type stuff is better because you can experiment with a lot of different ideas instead of just having a rigid essay in response to this one thing. Like I wrote the autobiography about my reaction to my grandmother's death, but I think if I wrote like, "My name is Dan. I was born in and lived here and I went to school here," it would have been really boring, but since we had the option to write about something that impacted us, I think that was a good idea because we could choose from a wide range of things and we could choose what we really had passion about.

For Dan, the College Writing curriculum gave him the space to write about what mattered to him because, except for the text-wrestling essay, he had the ability to choose

his topics and to experiment with each genre. This ability brought forward his passion for writing and also allowed him to express his emotions. He stopped going through the motions with his writing which enabled him to write for transformation.

The College Writing curriculum offered each participant a process that allowed them to write for transformation. Each of them took up different genres and literacy practices in different ways. While the curriculum provided some structure, it also left room for participants to make decisions about the kinds of writing and sharing they found most important. Participants could negotiate the content of their essays and the process by which they wrote and shared their writing. Participants engaged to a greater or lesser degree in individual literacy practices depending on their past experiences and their needs and desires. As the words of Brittney and Zackary exemplify, the College Writing curriculum brought participants to larger issues about identity and representation as well as the construction of knowledge and power: who defines ideas and what it means to write well. The College Writing curriculum offered participants access to alternative discourses to the discourses on writing each of them had taken up to construct their writing practice. I will now discuss in more detail the various literacy practices that participants described as transformative.

Writing Autobiography

Eight participants named writing autobiography as a transformative literacy practice. According to these participants, writing autobiography showed who you are and what is important to you. For these participants, writing about the self in an academic context felt like freedom and, as Michael stated during his first interview, "It's important to be free when you're getting everything out." Writing autobiography for College

Writing allowed participants to bring their subjective experience into an academic context. According to participants, writing autobiography helped them to understand their experience and themselves more. Through writing autobiography, some participants were able to let go of worrying about what others think about them. Writing autobiography felt like a "relief" and like a "big weight" had been lifted from them.

Some participants imagined how their lives could be through writing autobiography and letting go of their pasts. While writing autobiography, many of the participants claimed they were able to let go of some of their sadness and anger about the experiences and events in their past and to emote for the first time about them. Drawing on emotivist discourse, these participants named the release of emotions as the most transformative aspect of writing autobiography. Most participants claimed that writing autobiography made them feel good about themselves and able to move forward in their lives which positioned them within narrativist discourse. Those participants who wrote about experiences and events they defined as personal and private wrote autobiography to represent these experiences and events as public and shared. Most participants who defined writing autobiography as transformative wrote about painful events: injury, death and violence. They also wrote about surviving and recovering from these events. They used autobiography to normalize their experience and to represent themselves as normal as a way to resist the cultural discourses that position them and their experience as deviant. They wrote to place their stories into the public space of the classroom and beyond. In many ways, they wrote to heal the rift trauma can create between survivors and those around them by marginalizing their experience (Herman, 1999). Writing

autobiography connected many participants to the other students in the classroom and helped them to feel "less alone."

In her interview, Tina spoke about the transformative aspects of writing autobiography in College Writing. Writing her story about the breakdown of her family shifted her perspective on her past and allowed her to stop worrying about it. She stated:

> Writing the story felt good. It took a load off of me. Reading it, I started to cry cause it reminded me of it but then afterwards the more I talked about it, the more I understood things and the more I stopped worrying about it.

She wrote about a series of events in her life that changed her, that disrupted her normality and how she understood the world around her. She stated:

> That was the event that really impacted me. Usually my life was like fine and normal. When that happened, it made me more independent as a person instead of relying on my parents. It made me think more about life in general and how it could be.

During her interview, she talked about what it was like to read her essay aloud during the writing workshops. She struggled to position herself within an emotivist discourse because crying in the classroom felt so conflictive for her. She claimed:

> I was scared when I read it to other students. I started to cry, and I felt ashamed that I was crying and the story I was telling. It really hurt me a lot in remembering it but afterwards it felt a little better because they were like I never imagined being in a position like that and you're a strong person and they gave me more of like a boost in just like listening to me. That made it better. I don't like other people to see me cry cause to me it shows a weakness. I think it was kind of a relief. I was able to actually cry. I felt stupid afterward too.

Her descriptions of her experience in her writing workshops point to the complexity of writing autobiography in a public space like the classroom. Tina stated that it felt good to express her emotions and receive support from the other students in her workshop: to have them reflect back to her an image of herself as strong. She also stated that it hurt to remember, and she felt ashamed, stupid and weak for crying in the presence of other

students. For her, the positives outweighed the negatives because the emotional expression brought relief.

She used the autobiography to show who she was in the past and to represent herself as a "normal girl" in the present: a current image of herself she valued. She stated, "I thought writing it was a good choice. It showed who I was and it showed a normal person or like a normal girl." According to Tina, writing her autobiography also disrupted the discourses on social class that surround domestic violence in American culture. She stated in her interview:

> Even though you think you have a perfect family sometimes you don't and mostly you hear it about the lower class families and the domestic violence that goes on but I come up from an upper middle and it can happen to anyone. Some people are judgmental when they hear about the lower class and what kind of problems go on there but sometimes they don't understand that it does happen to everyone.

Tina described writing autobiography as a transformative literacy practice for many reasons. Writing her story helped her to feel better physically and psychologically. It also allowed her to confront her shame about her experience and to express her emotions. She wrote autobiography in College Writing to represent herself as "normal" and to challenge cultural discourses she identified as inaccurate in their representation of families. Later in the semester through her research, she came to believe that the dominant discourses on domestic violence silenced her experience as a member of the upper middle class and as a survivor of emotional abuse perpetrated by a woman. She wrote in her research essay, "Not realizing it, I was part of domestic violence." She found almost all of the sources in the library on domestic violence focused solely on male physical violence against women. She wrote in her process letter that she found it "interesting how not many books are on verbal abuse and men being battered and in the media you usually hear about women as victims and physical abuse." She wrote her

research essay combining the data she found and her personal experience to resist this silence. She also came to position writing her autobiography as resistance on a more personal level. She wrote at the end of her process letter, "Writing about this issue has made me realize that I can be a strong person. Keeping abuse to yourself doesn't do any good and letting go can release a lot of stress in life."

Unlike Tina, Julia wrote autobiography to remember a pleasant past and to offer her positive experiences with her family to others. She wrote about her favorite family rituals to share her joy in those rituals and her sense of connection to her family with her readers. She found through writing autobiography that she really enjoyed writing and was good at writing about herself which shifted her writer identity.

> I really enjoyed the class. It made me realize I do like writing a lot more, the more we got into it. It's something I actually like to do. I liked the freedom to write, especially the first one, autobiography. I like that: remembering stuff and writing about childhood and things like that. It's all about remembering. It made me realize that writing is something I'm pretty good at, and it's something that I want to continue. I enjoyed it. It inspired me, made me realize I wanted to keep writing.

As a business major, she didn't believe she would get many chances to write autobiography. After College Writing, she added journalism as a minor so that she could continue to write in ways that pleased her. She valued personal experience and considered it a source of knowledge. Drawing on narrativist discourse, she wrote autobiography to position herself as someone who knows and can speak from experience with confidence. She stated in her interview:

> Whenever I get a chance, I bring in my personal experience and relate it to myself if it's something I know. If I have experience, I want to share my own experience or what I know about it. Because when I'm writing about something that I don't know much about it's like, "who am I to write about this because I don't really know that much." But when you're writing and you can relate yourself to it, you're more confident about the subject matter cause you know more about it.

She wrote about her family and friends in the course because they matter the most to her, and she believed writing about them would show her readers who she is. She stated:

> I'm close to my family and my friends. My family is the most important thing to me so when I remember back to those memories, what's important to me is them and the things that we've done. If I could pick anything in the world, that's what's most important to me, writing about them. It's like a whole experience that will show them who I am. Autobiography is a chance to show people who you are and what is important to you, especially for people you don't know, it really shows who you are.

Like the other participants who described writing autobiography as transformative, Julia wrote autobiography to affirm her sense of self. She wrote to share the relationships and rituals in her past with the other students in the course so they could see who she is as a person. However, her descriptions of writing autobiography differ from those of other participants in several ways. Julia wrote to share experiences of pleasure: experiences that stabilized her sense of self. Unlike other participants, she did not write to resist shame or silence; she did not write to claim a coherent sense of self from past experiences of fragmentation. She did not write to resist discourses. Her descriptions of writing autobiography suggest that writing about personal experiences and emotions may offer any writer a transformative literacy practice.

The participants who defined writing autobiography as a transformative literacy practice wrote in ways that met their needs and desires. These participants wrote about the experiences and events that impacted them the most even if the writing of these experiences and events evoked painful memories and deep emotion. Each of these participants took up a narrativist discourse and stated that writing autobiography gave them the space to write the story they needed to write for themselves. The College Writing curriculum and the way I taught the course offered participants access to what I would define as a feminist narrativist discourse. I openly encouraged students to write

their stories as a way to bring themselves more fully into the classroom and into their writing. My beliefs about storying come from my background in feminist literature and a discourse which often asserts the value of telling about lived experience as a way to expand sociocultural knowledge but also as a way to personal liberation. Three of the participants who defined writing autobiography as a transformative literacy practice drew on the dominant discourses on violence to construct their experiences as shameful and to explain their silencing. Writing autobiography for College Writing offered them access to an alternative narrativist discourse which allowed them to end their silence and bring their stories into a public space as a way to resist their shame.

The eight participants who identified writing autobiography as transformative concurred with Tina and Julia in their belief that writing autobiography in the course helped them to feel known by others which transformed their sense of self. The act of writing about themselves in an academic context like the College Writing classroom felt like the practice of freedom for these participants as it released them from the restrictions of denying the personal in their academic writing and allowed them to resist the institutional discourses on academic writing they had taken up before College Writing. According to these participants, writing autobiography for College Writing met their need to tell their story. It also allowed them to position themselves within a narrativist discourse as writers who know about that which they write through their experience, their bodies and their emotions which I would argue also positions them within a feminist discourse on knowledge. The participants who described writing autobiography as transformative wrote to construct knowledge and to claim a sense of authority through writing the stories in their lives.

Writing the Research Essay

Eleven of the participants defined the process of writing their research essay as a transformative literacy practice. According to these participants, writing the research essay shifted their writer identity and changed the way they write. For nine of the participants, writing the research essay shifted their sense of self. The research essay assignment required participants to write about a topic that mattered to them. It also required them to connect their research to the personal. According to participants, completing the research essay gave them more confidence in themselves as writers and made them feel more knowledgeable. For some, the research process changed their sense of self by giving them access to alternative discourses on the topics about which they wrote and closely associated themselves. By conducting research for the essay, participants connected themselves to larger contexts and investigated issues that they defined as important. Through writing their research essay, participants learned new ideas, connected to others that had similar experiences and interests to their own and brought together the personal with the research on their topic. Some participants also used their research essay to experiment with form by breaking out of the ways they had been taught to write an essay in previous academic settings. Other participants used their research essay to challenge cultural and institutional discourses that they experienced as silencing and shaming.

Dan defined writing his research essay as transformative because it allowed him to break out of the traditional format for writing essays he learned in high school. As the teacher, I drew on a poststructuralist discourse to encourage students to experiment with the form and content of their research essays. Dan took up this discourse and wrote his

research essay about the leaves changing color in New England during autumn and experimented with combining his observational journal entries and the research on the topic. He stated:

> I had the opportunity to experiment, and I hadn't really before, and I thought it would be fun to like put all these different types of writing in there, like the journal type of writing. I had to kind of improvise but in the past I had wrote like an introduction, like the hamburger thing you know, the introduction, the meat, the lettuce and all the toppings, that's all the description, and then the bun, the conclusion and it all goes together. I had never had the opportunity in high school to experiment. It was always real rigid. So when I got to the research essay, I was like why not just try a new thing.

While writing the essay, he struggled with wanting to accurately represent the foliage process and needing to integrate the research. He felt challenged by writing this essay which prompted him to work hard on his writing and to engage with the writing process. His sense of accomplishment with this essay shifted his writer identity and the way that he writes. He stated during his second interview:

> I was happy that I actually did research. I'd really never done research like that before. I did a real Works Cited page. Before that I guess I would just look through books and then I would get stuff in my head and I wouldn't really take notes on anything and just remember what I read and then go through and put it on the paper and my Works Cited would just be random books on the subject. This one I actually used the books and took notes so the fact that I did that made me happy. I enjoyed it and I always had my pile of books right there and I was always going back and forth between the books and the paper, and I had a sense that I actually achieved something with that one.

Writing the research essay gave Dan the opportunity to write outside of the "hamburger" format he had learned in high school. He "actually did research" and felt a sense of pride in the essay he wrote for College Writing. As a high school student, Dan had conformed to the conventions of academic writing he had been taught and spent most of his time as a writer going through "the motions." Writing his research essay outside of those bounds transformed Dan as he experimented and explored with his writing and discovered his

ability to conduct research and to write in ways other than those he had been schooled in as a high school student.

Preety used her research essay for more political purposes. She explored the connection between gender discrimination and higher education and drew on her subjective experience to position herself within her essay as a woman of color in the academy. She chose to research this topic because she wanted to learn more about how gender discrimination would impact her in the future as a graduate student. She stated:

> I'm going to college and hopefully I will go to grad school and pursue a doctorate degree or I will go into a professional field to work. So that's something that's coming on for me. I wanted to look ahead in this paper and see what's going on.

When Preety spoke about becoming more confident in the course, she talked about being able to express her opinion and having people support her ideas: a very different experience than she had had in other courses where she claimed, "professors don't really seem to take interest in what I have to say or what I'm thinking." She used two essay units for her research essay and wrote a longer and more complex essay addressing her concerns about gender discrimination and higher education. In the classroom, she was very proud of her research essay and became more confident in her writing with each draft. Writing the research essay for College Writing gave her the space to take the issue of gender discrimination in higher education seriously. Through her research, she got to represent her experiences as a student at the university as being about more than the individual. She used her essay to challenge the discourses that claim women share full equality with men in American culture and to assert that discrimination abounds, and women need to be aware of how that discrimination negatively impacts their lives. When discussing her essay, she stated:

> Everyone should be aware of this issue, gender discrimination. I focused on higher education. We call the United States progressive, and we are meant to think that women have all these rights, and we can do whatever we want to do. I don't think that's the case. In terms of higher ed, it's the same thing. Women do not equally pursue certain subjects or pursue higher education at all. The few ones that make it are not as supported by their professors. Even in my classes, I do see that kind of environment. I think it's the same thing when you go to get your doctorate degree. It's going to happen to me.

In her portfolio review, Preety identified her research essay as her strongest essay. She felt it was her strongest because she got to write about a topic about which she felt passion, and she had the time to explore and develop her ideas. She wrote in her self-assessment at the end of the course:

> I know that my strongest essay is my research essay because I was able to choose the topic for this essay. I chose a topic that I am very much passionate to write about. I also had more time to know in depth about my topic. I got the time to read books and articles about it. As a result I knew what I wanted to write about in this essay and this is quite apparent in the essay.

While writing this essay, she found research on her topic that supported her beliefs and explained her experiences of gender discrimination. Writing this essay contributed to her increased sense of confidence as a writer and a woman in academia. Similar to Dan, Preety felt a sense of accomplishment with the completion of her research essay which increased her confidence as an academic writer. Connecting her subjective experience with her research also increased her confidence as she found validation among published writers and researchers for her beliefs about discrimination in higher education.

Natasha also used her research essay for political purposes and to challenge dominant cultural and institutional discourses. Diagnosed with Bipolar Disorder as an adolescent, Natasha struggled with her health and brought that struggle to her research essay. According to her, writing this essay made her diagnosis "more real." She wrote in many ways to resist the dominant discourses on mental illness as she also drew on those

discourses to write about her experience with Bipolar. She wrote to evoke emotion in her readers and to educate them. She wrote to connect to an audience and sought compassion and understanding from her readers. She stated in her interview:

> People with mental illness are viewed as disabled. Under the Disabilities Act, we are allowed certain things because we have a mental illness. Like here at this university for instance, I was allowed to drop two of my classes this past semester because I was having complications with a disability. I didn't want this essay to be about disability so that people would feel sorry. I wanted people to understand what it means to be in this world so they would better understand how to deal with people who have it. I want people to feel just as angry as me about how it's dealt with, that it happens at all in the first place and then motivated to help. It will happen to someone in your family and will happen to one of your friends, and it's just so common. I knew that my essay wasn't going to be something that other people really read, but I felt like I had to write it that way anyway. I was writing it as if thousands of people were going to read it, and it was actually going to affect a lot of people.

Drawing on her personal experience with Bipolar Disorder, Natasha wrote her research essay with the desire to articulate her experience and to motivate her audience to understand and help those who struggle with mental illness. Natasha's essay on Bipolar Disorder disrupted dominant discourses on mental illness by bringing her story into the mainstream of a university classroom and positioning a woman diagnosed as Bipolar as also intelligent, articulate and able. She shocked me the first time we discussed the topic of her essay because my beliefs about Bipolar Disorder had been shaped by the medical and psychological discourses on the disorder that most often represent those diagnosed as unpredictable and incapable of functioning in mainstream culture, and Natasha was an excellent student. Her essay not only transformed Natasha's understanding of her diagnosis but mine as well. I also imagine the other students in the class had their beliefs about mental illness challenged by her essay.

The participants who identified writing the research essay as a transformative literacy practice defined multiple aspects of writing the essay as vital. While the

assignment required that they write about a topic which mattered to them, they found this requirement liberal in comparison to having their research topic assigned to them. They identified writing about topics which were important to them as necessary to writing for transformation. Writing about the issues that mattered to them motivated them to spend time in the library, search for the best sources on their topic and engage with their sources in meaningful ways. Their investment in their topics created a desire in them to learn more about their interests. This investment and motivation changed the way they wrote by shifting them away from writing for their teacher to writing to learn and communicate their ideas. The process of conducting research helped participants to feel more knowledgeable and better able to articulate their ideas in ways that made them feel competent in an academic context. They used the multiple drafts and the feedback from other students to develop their thinking and to bring a level of complexity to their writing. Participants also identified the process of writing the research essay as transformative because it broke them out of the five-paragraph essay format. The break with this academic convention changed the way these participants wrote and expanded their understanding of the possibilities of academic writing that includes research from outside sources. For this essay assignment, I required them to write a minimum of five pages and to cite at least five outside sources, which could include original research like interviews or surveys, as well as conform to the format of the Modern Language Association. As long as they met these requirements, they could write about any topic and bring together different genres if they chose to do so.

One of the most transformative aspects of writing the research essay for these participants consisted of the inclusion of the personal in their essay. Most of them had

been taught to never bring the first person to a research essay. They had also been taught to represent themselves as objective in their writing. As Tina stated about her research essay on domestic violence, "I didn't realize I could actually write and say this happened to me and the researchers say and give an example of how it is possible." While participants struggled in many ways with including their ideas and experiences in their essays, they all found the inclusion valuable and their writing more powerful when they used the first person or removed the illusion of objectivity from their writing. Through bringing their subjective experience to their research essay, many of the participants came to understand themselves as producers of knowledge instead of just the reproducers of the knowledge found in their sources.

By connecting the research they found on their topic with their ideas and experiences, participants wrote essays that changed their sense of self, their writer identity and the way they write. The participants who attributed a change in their sense of self to writing their research essay wrote about topics that connected deeply to experiences that had shaped their identities. Conducting research on these topics, developing their thinking and articulating their findings shifted these participants' sense of self as their writing shifted their understanding of the topics about which they wrote. Participants defined this process as most transformative when they used it to resist cultural and institutional discourses that positioned them as inferior such as the discourses on gender that Preety wrote about in her essay and spoke about in her interviews.

The participants who identified a change in their writer identity due to writing the research essay found themselves more confident as writers. Most of these participants struggled with feeling adequate as academic writers. The process of completing the

research essay taught them that they could write well academically if given enough time and space to explore and discover their ideas. They also found that when they brought their ideas and experiences to their writing that many of the issues they struggled with as academic writers no longer existed. They wanted to write about what they had learned through their research so they did not procrastinate. They had experiences and ideas they wanted to share so they wrote with much more fluency and passion. They had more of a sense of purpose as writers as they wrote about what mattered to them and its connection to their lives.

Bringing themselves to their academic writing changed the way these participants wrote. They worked hard in College Writing to overcome their inhibition about including the personal in their research essay and their efforts changed their writing process. They stated in their interviews that they felt their writing to be stronger when they included their ideas and experiences. At the time of their interviews, some of them had met with success in other classes when they included themselves in their writing. Others had been told to "go home and write in their journal" if they wanted to write about themselves. All of them had developed an awareness that the conventions of academic writing vary across audiences. After College Writing, they found they had decisions to make as writers as they weighed getting good grades versus writing in ways that they found more meaningful and pleasurable. During their interviews, many of the participants described experiences in courses after College Writing where they felt forced to conform to conventions that limited their ability to write if they wanted to succeed. For example, Tina talked about writing in a mythology course where she was "allowed to

relate my writing to society but not me." She stated the writing she did for this course was "dull and boring" and she "just wanted to get it over with and put whatever."

The process of writing the research essay disrupted the discourses participants drew on to construct academic writing by challenging the border between the personal and the academic. The requirements of the research essay pushed participants to cross this border and to write in new ways. To complete the research essay assignment successfully participants needed to make decisions as writers about the topics they would research and the form and content of their essays. They also needed to include themselves as authoritative sources in their essays. According to participants, the process of making these decisions and merging the personal and the academic transformed them as writers. Their experiences writing for other classes after College Writing suggest that the process of writing the research essay also gave participants more of a sense of agency as writers by positioning academic writing conventions as mutable and student-writers as responsible for the decisions they make about their words. Their experiences also suggest that traditional academic discourse on writing and institutional grading practices interpellate the desire of participants to succeed as students and coerce them to conform to institutional academic writing conventions even as they identify those conventions as Shane did as "not the way to learn how to write well." College Writing seemed to make participants more aware of the coercive structures that shape their writing practices, but those structures continued to hold the power to dictate those practices.

Writing the Journal

Seven participants found writing in the journal to be transformative. They claimed writing in the journal changed the way they write by giving them practice as

writers so that they became more fluent. Six of them claimed writing in the journal transformed their sense of self by offering them the space to reflect and learn from their experience and to express their emotions without worrying about audience. All seven participants claimed the journals as their private space to write. They defined writing in the journal as liberating them from the conventions of academic writing and their fears about audience. The journal was a space for some participants to write down their experience so they wouldn't lose it: a space to get their stories and emotions out. For others, the journal offered them a space to let go and leave their past behind. Many participants used their journals to write about events and experiences that they did not want to share with others because the events and experiences still evoked too much emotion for participants to feel comfortable bringing them into the classroom. According to some participants, they used the journal to put words to experiences they had not rendered in language before. The journal seemed to offer participants a "wild" space to write uncensored and to be vulnerable in language. For some participants, the journal helped them to slow down, work through their ideas and make sense of their experience. Participants described the journal as a space for them to practice writing and to generate ideas for their essays. Many of the participants connected their journal entries to their essays and used their journal to write drafts of each essay.

Michael found the journal particularly transformative because it gave him the space to write about his experience of September 11, 2001. During his semester of College Writing, Michael went to New York City to see a Michael Jackson concert on the night of September 10th. When he woke up in the city on September 11th, the World Trade Center had been attacked and the city was in chaos. Michael found his way out of

the city, and the events of that day changed his life. At first he did not feel ready to write about his experience of September 11th in a public forum, so he used his journal. The descriptions of his journal writing depict a sense of uninhibited release, emotional vulnerability and the possibility of healing. While talking about his experience in New York City, Michael stated during his interview:

> I knew I had to do something with it, so I wrote in my journal. It was just kind of like emotions, like everything coming out and trying to express myself. Probably some wild stuff but just going crazy trying to get everything out. It was good to have that venue to write in. It forced me to get a lot out and express myself.

Michael believed writing to be good for him for several reasons: it helped surface buried issues; it gave coherence to his experience; it helped him understand himself better, and it offered him a space of release. Writing in his journal also began the process of writing a book about his experience of September 11th, which he completed after the course. He stated:

> Writing can be healthy, and it can also raise a lot of issues, things you didn't know were there. It helps you organize your mind. The journal was kind of like a stepping stone to writing my book. It was my way of getting it all down so that I wouldn't lose it. Just trying to learn for myself about the situation. I could see it all in front of me. It was just like nakedness in front of me, learning from it. I'm just trying to sift through all of the illusions and the confusion and things just so that I understand them. Writing for me will always be, whenever I need to vent, I know at my lowest moments I will always turn to writing to get it out there.

While Michael valued all of the writing he did for the course, he described the journal writing as the most transformative. I would suggest that this has to do with the fact that he experienced a catastrophic event during College Writing and needed an immediate way to deal with his experience and emotions. The private journal writing for the course gave him pages to fill without any concerns about audience: a space where he could be naked in his struggle to understand the violence he witnessed in New York City. The writing Michael did in his journal during the course began his transition from

understanding his individual experience to placing that experience within a more collective story as he wrote his book manuscript. After the course finished, Michael contacted me to read his manuscript. He wanted my comments on his book and suggestions as to how to get his story published so that others could read his experience. Through writing in his journal, he became ready to share his story.

The journal writing he did in the course gave him what he needed at the time so that he could emote and give coherence to an experience that ended thousands of lives and changed millions of people. When he returned to the university after September 11th, I waited for him to bring his experience into the writing he did for the course and wondered how he would cope with what he had seen and lived. He waited until his last essay to write about his days in New York City and focused that essay on the Michael Jackson concerts. At the time, I thought it strange that he would not focus on the World Trade Center attacks. Since his interviews, I now understand that he was writing about the attacks in his journal during the entire semester and that fulfilled his need to render his experience in language. I also understand he was not ready to share his experience in the public space of the classroom at the time of the course.

Kirsten also found the journal writing transformative because it offered her a private space to write with less inhibitions and more release. She stated:

> I wrote and wrote and wrote and wrote. The journal was better than the assignments because I really didn't care. I wrote whatever came to my mind, and there were a couple of times where I thought I can't believe I'm writing this.

While writing in the journal felt private to Kirsten, she also had an awareness of the words she wrote having more of a public voice than if she never wrote them at all:

> I wasn't afraid anybody was going to read it but sometimes putting your words on paper I almost feel that it gives them a voice. They're out there somewhere and

> somebody's aware of them so a couple of times I had to catch myself, but I just wrote.

Writing in the journal helped Kirsten prepare for writing her essays by giving her practice with writing and helping her focus and relax. She stated:

> It was very good for me. I'm very quick and I'm very fast and actually sitting down and writing makes me actually think about what I'm saying and what I'm writing so in a way it slows me down and allows me to complete a thought even though I may go from writing about my dog to a guest, it still calmed me down and relaxed me and made me think about things a little bit slower and a little bit more than I normally would. The journal was my private time and my thoughts. I got some of the thoughts running around my head on paper. I left them there and then I went on. My mind didn't feel so cluttered after I wrote in the journal and went to the paper.

Kirsten used the journal to give her thoughts "voice" and to quiet her mind. Her descriptions of writing in the journal conjure images similar to Michael's: the journal as a space to write all the "wild stuff" that needed someplace to go. Kirsten also claimed that the "private time" of the journal supported her essay writing by "clearing" her mind so she could focus on writing in a more formalized way. I would also argue that the journal writing may have played an important role in the "catalyst" Kirsten described the course as providing so she could write for transformation. Through writing in the journal, she released many of her inhibitions about writing as well as her inhibitions about putting her past into words. This release enabled her to write her final essay, "The Table," which she defined as the most transformative writing she did for the course because she finally put her story out into the world (see page 178).

The participants who identified journal writing as transformative enjoyed having the space to write without structure or fear of being read. All of them, except for Michael, had kept journals before the course. Having a page requirement to fulfill for journal writing during the course encouraged these participants to write more consistently

in their journals than they would have on their own. Some of them appreciated this aspect of the course; some of them did not. They all claimed that journal writing served them best when they needed a place to vent their emotions and express themselves without worrying about others. Each of them knew that the possibility of someone reading their journal existed because once they put the words on paper, as Kirsten stated, they were out there. Even with this knowledge, participants described the journal as private space where they wrote about experiences and ideas that they did not want to share with anyone. While many of these participants found sharing their essays to be transformative, they also found *not* sharing their journal writing to be the same. They made decisions about which personal experiences to share in the classroom through their essays and which to keep private in their journal. They each expressed the idea that if they were still overwhelmed by writing the experience in their journal than the experience wasn't one they were prepared to bring into the public space of the classroom. The participants who did not identify the journal writing as transformative had no previous experience writing in a journal, and they claimed they did not like unstructured writing and found little value in writing for no audience.

The Writing Workshops

Six participants named the writing workshops as transformative. The process of sharing their writing with other students helped many of the participants face their fears about writing. Through the writing workshops, participants received positive comments on their writing which increased their confidence in themselves as writers. They also felt like they were taken seriously as writers and academics because of the comprehensive critiques they received from students during the workshops. The participants who wrote

about events they had kept secret and about which they felt shame described the writing workshops as one of the most transformative literacy practices. They used the writing workshops to break their silence, but, just as important, the other students in their writing workshops responded with compassion and acceptance when these participants had feared being blamed and judged for the events in their past. Through the writing workshops, participants felt they were able to talk about what their essays meant to them and why the topics they wrote about were so important.

The writing workshops also allowed participants to bring the personal into an academic context. Reading aloud in the workshops gave participants the space to hear their stories and to express their emotions to others. Most participants felt like they received comments from other students that helped them to revise their essays and to move forward with their writing. According to participants, putting their words into the public space of the writing workshops gave their words substance and got their words out which allowed some participants to let go of emotions and memories and others to hold on to them. While participants defined the writing workshops as transformative, they also spoke of their struggle with sharing their writing with others; some described this process as painful even as it benefited them.

Participants who wrote about events and experiences they defined as personal and private felt more comfortable sharing their writing with the students in their workshops than with their family and friends. These participants felt a strong need to protect their family and friends from the emotional content of their essays. Many of them also felt a need to represent themselves to their family and friends as strong: an image they believed would be challenged by the essays they wrote for the course. For these participants, there

was less risk involved with sharing the events and experiences in their lives with the students in their workshops than with their family and friends. Sharing their essays in the writing workshops allowed participants to more fully represent themselves and their experiences by giving them an audience they didn't feel the need to protect from their stories and with whom they felt more comfortable expressing themselves.

In her interview, AnnMarie described her writing workshops and what she got from them as a writer. Her insight on the workshops captures the experiences of the participants who spoke about the writing workshops as a transformative literacy practice. She described a sense of commonality she labeled as important to her writing: a sense that the other students in her workshops had similar feelings about writing and sharing their writing in the course.

> We had like little groups, like four or five. And each person would read their paper out loud which was really hard the first time. After that you didn't care really cause you knew that everyone else felt the same way.

I required that students read their essays aloud for the first writing workshop of each essay. Like AnnMarie, most participants found reading aloud difficult but also invaluable to their revision process. I also believe that the practice of reading aloud contributed to participants becoming more confident in themselves and as writers because it challenged them to let go of their fear of putting their words and ideas into the public domain. In her interview, AnnMarie talked about the value of reading aloud as well as the value of the feedback she received from other students in her writing workshops. She stated:

> You just read out loud and just from reading it out loud first of all you'd learn like so much on your own and then a lot of the times I was lucky enough to have pretty good groups and people would really get feedback not even just like what could you do to make your paper better but like what they thought of your story or just asking you questions about your life or whatever.

AnnMarie felt a connection to the other students in her writing workshops which mattered a great deal to her and contributed to the transformative aspects of the workshops. She felt like the other students in her workshops accepted her even after she shared her past, her emotions and her ideas with them. She claimed:

> And I liked that people really cared. No one just sat there and didn't even listen. Everyone really paid attention and that made you feel like so much better. People really asked questions, and it wasn't necessarily that you would always come away with like, "this introduction needs work" or something. You'd come away with more like, "hey, I got it out and people don't hate me for it."

She also talked about how the writing workshops contributed to her revision process:

> Sometimes like they would ask you questions just about you know your life, your story and you'd answer and you'd realize "wow, if I put that in it would make a little more sense and they'd help you make more sense of the story because in your head you know the whole story but when you write it out you don't want it to be too long but at the same time you need to make everybody understand what's going on so that even though they weren't directly saying you should add this or shouldn't add this just their questions and stuff would help.

Sharing her writing in the workshops transformed AnnMarie as she built relationships with other students in the class who also invested in the writing workshop process. When AnnMarie described a change in her sense of self which she attributed to writing in the course, she described herself as more confident and accepting of herself, her experience and her emotions. In her descriptions of her writing workshops, she claimed she came away with, "hey, I got it out and people don't hate me for it." This description of the writing workshops suggests that they played an integral role in writing for transformation for AnnMarie. Getting it out and realizing people don't "hate" her for how she thinks shifted her sense of self so that she felt more confident in expressing her ideas and emotions and less worried about what others think of her.

The Writing Workshops centered each class session of College Writing. Participants spent a considerable amount of each class in writing workshops. The participants who identified the writing workshops as a literacy practice that transformed them and the way they wrote during the class described writing workshop groups like AnnMarie: groups that involved students who invested themselves in the group process, gave helpful feedback and connected to each other in the workshop. The participants who defined the writing workshops as a transformative literacy practice also had a vested interest in their audience; it mattered a great deal to them what others thought about them and their writing.

The participants who did not identify the writing workshops as transformative spoke of several reasons why the writing workshops did not change them or their writing. Unlike participants like AnnMarie, Brittney stated that none of the students in her writing workshops seemed invested in their writing and offered her very little feedback. She found herself going to a friend outside of the course to help her with revision on her essays. Dan, Patty and Shane gave each other feedback on their writing outside of class so that the workshops in class fulfilled no important purpose. As students in the Talent Advancement Program for Engineers, they lived together on the same floor in the dormitory and did much of their academic work together. They constructed their own writing workshop process on their floor and came to class with most of their revisions done. According to them, the writing workshops in the class offered them very little they didn't already know from the feedback they had received from each other outside of class. Natasha also did not identify the writing workshops as a transformative literacy practice. She stated that she did not engage in the writing workshop process because she

did not feel like she could trust the other students in her group and felt they had very little to offer her as a writer. Michael found the writing workshops to be helpful but not transformative. He invested himself more in the articulation of his ideas and his journal writing than in the writing workshops.

Participants who identified writing workshops as a transformative literacy practice indicated that several factors played an important role in the construction of groups. The investment of all members of the workshop group appears as the most important component. Participants who defined the writing workshops as a transformative literacy practice invested in the workshop process and also felt as if the other students in their workshops invested themselves as well. For the writing workshops to be transformative, participants needed to feel as if other students listened to them and responded with constructive comments. If participants did not invest in the writing workshops or if they felt the other students in the group did not invest themselves, they did not define the workshops as a transformative literacy practice. In order for participants to invest themselves in the writing workshops, they needed to feel as if they could trust other students in the class and the feedback other students could offer had value to them as writers. If participants did not trust other students or believed they had nothing to offer them, they did not identify the writing workshops as a transformative literacy practice. This seems to suggest that the level of investment of students and the relationships they build with each other in the class play an integral part in writing for transformation in college composition.

Pedagogy

All of the participants identified various aspects of the way I taught the course as transformative. According to participants, the way I structured and taught the course changed how they wrote, how they thought about themselves as writers and how they thought about their experience in and out of the classroom. When participants spoke and wrote about my pedagogy, they identified aspects of my teaching that enabled them to write in transformative ways. These aspects connected to the desires of each participant while they were enrolled in College Writing. The Writing Program at the university gives Teaching Associates the ability to make decisions about the way they teach the College Writing curriculum. I designed my curriculum to reflect my beliefs about the most transformative way to teach the course: the way that I believed would allow more students to write in more meaningful ways. I incorporated my experiences from learning to write in classrooms shaped by process pedagogy which taught me to value writing workshops and the writing process of each writer. I incorporated my beliefs in the importance of narrative and the expression of emotion. I also brought poststructuralist and feminist discourses about the power of language and desire into my teaching of the curriculum. Lastly, I brought my belief in the need for social transformation and in the ability of writing to enact such change. My grading policy, which includes students writing self-evaluation and assessment, reflects my desire to have less authority in the classroom and to help students construct a writing process that relies less on their practice of pleasing teachers in their desire to get good grades.

Participants stated that I made it seem like it was acceptable for them to write about their experience and their emotions and to tell the truth of their experience. I made

it acceptable for them to tell their stories and to express their emotions. Because of the ways I responded to them in conferences and through my written comments on their essays, participants felt like I listened to them, and I thought that they were important. They also stated that they felt like I thought their ideas and their writing were important. They claimed I was demanding but flexible, and this forced them to work hard on their writing and to meet deadlines but to also feel like they could ask for what they needed if they were struggling with their writing or couldn't meet the deadlines. They described me as giving them control of the classroom and respecting them. They felt I pushed their thinking in their essays through my written and verbal comments and questions on their writing. Participants described my grading policy as one of the most transformative aspects of my pedagogy. According to participants, receiving no grades on their individual essays forced them to assess their own writing and to stop writing to please the teacher. Participants made it very clear that what I did as a teacher mattered to them and shaped the writing they did during the course.

By centering the writing workshops and not grading individual essays, I kept myself at the periphery of the class as much as possible. I used my written comments and the conversations during conferences to present my ideas and suggestions to participants about their writing. At least once during each essay unit, I also explicitly stated that my comments were not meant as commands, and each writer could make decisions about revisions that included or discarded my suggestions without penalty. The portfolio structure of the course allowed both the participants and me to focus on the process of writing and less on the immediate product of each essay. Participants revised their essays until they handed in their portfolio at the end of the course. When they wrote their final

evaluation of their portfolio, they most often recognized a great deal of improvement in their writing.

According to Kirsten, my comments on her essays made her feel valuable and encouraged her to work hard on her writing. Feeling important mattered to Kirsten as she struggled with her identity in the classroom as a non-traditional university student. It also mattered as she worked to build her writer confidence. She stated in her second interview:

> Everybody needs to feel important, needs to feel like people are listening to them, and you made me feel that way. You didn't just blindly run through the essays and use abbreviations for comments. Your comments didn't shatter me. I wanted to read them. I wanted to do better. They made me feel important. It made me feel like at least you were listening and you read it.

My comments on Kirsten's essays made her feel like I engaged in her writing and listened to her written words. My comments also made her feel like I respected her as a writer by not shattering her which made her want "to do better." What I wrote on each of her essays mattered to Kirsten as she wrote to be heard and to feel important; I was part of a dialogue Kirsten created between herself and her audience which played an integral role in Kirsten writing for transformation.

Preety also found that my pedagogy met her needs. She struggled while writing her essays to meet the deadlines of the summer course because they were so close together, and she had a work schedule to meet as well. Preety also struggled as a writer to clarify her thinking on paper which took more time than was usually given between drafts. She stated:

> You were kind of demanding in a way that was productive but not limiting to ourselves or restricting. Asking for our work to be done on time, but if we needed time, you were able to be flexible. There are times when you try really hard, but you can't do it.

In her interview, Preety also spoke of a common theme in the interviews with all participants: the teacher-student relationship as one of the most important aspects of learning in the classroom. She claimed:

> I think one of the most important things is being able to relate to the teacher. You have to have the teacher-student relationship. You have to feel comfortable in the classroom and with the professor in order to fully participate and fully get into the learning.

The relationship Preety and I built during the course enabled her to engage more fully in the research and writing she did for the course. She seemed to feel safe with me and to trust that I would respect her process as a writer and give her what she needed to write her best which allowed her to write in ways that changed her.

Shane also talked about aspects of my pedagogy and their impact on his writing ability. He spoke, in particular, about the value of not getting graded on individual essays:

> I think not getting grades is probably *why* I actually have an idea on how to write now because before it was always just writing exactly the way the teacher wanted me to. She gave a basic layout and said, "Do it like this or else you get an F basically." Having no grades was painful, but it worked.

He also valued having to make decisions in the class about his writing and evaluating his own work. These practices offered him a different way to perform in the classroom as a student which he found transformative. He stated:

> Your approach to teaching definitely impacted me a lot more than other ways of teaching that I've seen. It worked. You didn't hand us back papers with grades on them. You made us evaluate our own work and ourselves. You pretty much made us run the class on our own basically only you ended up giving us a grade at the end. You made us sit down at the end and look at all our work and think about it and think about where it came from since we first started and grade ourselves on that which is very different than a lot of teachers will do. A lot of teachers will just give you a grade for every paper. Don't really care how much you improve or anything and then just average the grades and that's your grade.

For Shane, reflecting on his writing and assessing it "worked" for him as a writer. He felt more connected to his writing process, and he felt like he had more power to "run the class" but also to determine the value of his writing. Shane described me as "part of the class by a lot yet nonexistent in it at the same time." Participating in conferences on each essay and not receiving grades caused Shane to feel like I cared about his writing and the effort he put into improving it. My resistance to a more authoritative discourse on teaching writing transformed how Shane understood himself as a writer and also changed how he felt in the writing classroom.

The participants who wrote about events they defined as personal and private appreciated the fact that I was able to discuss their essays with them. These participants had experienced a personal and cultural silence around the topics in their essays and found the ending of that silence transformative. For example, Patty found my response to her autobiography about being raped integral to the transformation this essay enacted. She appreciated my willingness to speak about her experience of rape. She also valued the fact that I gave her the choice of who she shared her essay with in the class. Traditionally, all students read their essays aloud in the writing workshop groups. Patty came to class early the first day of the workshop on this essay to tell me she would not be sharing her essay with other students. I had not seen her essay at this point and did not know what she had written about for this assignment. I told her she could inform the group that she would not read aloud and then make choices about who would give her feedback so she could revise her essay. She chose people in the class she knew better than others to read her essay.

Because this was the last essay of the course, I also had a choice about how to respond to her essay. I do not conference the final essay at mid-draft, so I read her essay and the process letter for this essay for the first time the day after her final conference. I schedule final conferences during the week after classes finish. Traditionally, she and I would not have seen each other again once she handed in her portfolio and completed her final conference. As part of writing the process letter, I asked students to answer the question: what did you learn from writing the essay? Patty responded in her process letter:

> I learned that letting a secret out is a scary experience. When people read the paper, I feel nervous and naked. I don't know if that makes sense, but I want to know what they are thinking. Another thing I learned is that people are silent on such taboo subjects. Not a single person made a lot of corrections on my paper. I still do not know if it is because they do not know how to correct it, or if it is a good paper and doesn't need corrections, as they claim. The most important thing I learned: I am ready to talk about the rapes, but not with people who I don't know. I even have a hard time handing this paper in to you. It is hard for me, and I am not sure how to react. I'll never know your input on this subject. I want to know how you react because I have never told someone who doesn't know me. I want to see how someone outside my group of friends sees this subject. I'm really afraid to let you read this!!! Please keep this in confidence. I have not done anything about it for a reason, and I wish to continue to do nothing. Although I am pretty confident you will keep my secret.

After reading her essay and her process letter, I contacted her through electronic mail to ask her if she would return for a second conference. I felt it imperative to do this because she was very clear in her process letter that my response to her essay was important to her. I wanted to meet with her in person because I understood the writing of her essay to be an important move on her part as she wrote her story about being raped for the first time and put that story into public space. I also wanted her to know that I would keep her confidence and was not afraid or embarrassed to talk about her experience with her. I

wanted to support her as she broke the silence around her experience of rape. She stated in her interview:

> You almost got a different paper. The night before I was to hand this in I was sitting at the computer writing another paper. That's how close you were to getting a completely different paper. There was definitely a fear about letting you know this about me. I was afraid of other people reading it. You hadn't done anything up to that point that made me not trust you. You didn't make me read it in class. In fact you had hardly mentioned the paper whatsoever in front of other people. I didn't think that you would like try to talk to me about it or pursue it at all. Most people shy away from those kinds of subjects. I just didn't really expect any feedback on it whatsoever even though I asked you for some. I don't think I expected you to react at all. Most people either shy away from it or act all nonchalant about it. The fact that you asked me about it was unique. I liked it because only one or two other people have ever had the gall to ask me about it. Most people don't ask questions about it, but I'm open to it.

My response to Patty's essay about being raped supported her as she wrote to end her silence and to confront her shame about her experience. From working with groups of teachers and reading the literature on teaching composition, I know that many people within academic contexts struggle with essays like the one Patty wrote: essays about bodily violence, especially sexual violence. The descriptions Patty gave of my pedagogy and its impact on her suggest several things: teachers can support students as they work toward healing from their experiences of violence by providing the space for them to control their writing process: who reads their essays and when; teachers can also support students who write about experiences of violence by resisting the cultural and institutional discourses that proclaim these experiences "taboo" in public domains like the university and the classroom. Patty wrote about an experience that leaves most rape survivors feeling out of control (Horsman, 1999). I would argue that having control of writing her story and who she shared it with may have offered her back some of the control she lost when she was raped. I would also argue that my response to her and her essay helped her to let go of some of the shame she felt at being raped by acknowledging

her experience as part of the human experience: not to be silenced or stigmatized or forbidden from the classroom.

Like Patty, Tina wrote about a topic surrounded by silence and appreciated my support as she wrote her story and brought it into the classroom. In her interview, she talked about the importance of my feedback during conferences and my written comments on her essays. She positioned me as somewhere between a student and a teacher because she saw my comments as pushing her thinking but not being authoritative. She found it helpful that my feedback and comments focused on the content of her writing and less on academic conventions. She stated:

> You told us what we should do and how to fix stuff and you asked us questions so we could think more of how to fix it. You were kind of like a student reader because you had questions to ask if you didn't understand something. Usually with teachers they just do grammar and that's about it. You brought up other stuff that I wouldn't normally think of and it got me to think more and try to expand more or elaborate.

I also encouraged her to write the truth of her experience and pushed her to contextualize that experience and her ideas. She stated during her second interview:

> I was hesitant to actually say what I felt and then you said I should try to get my truth out more because you knew that that wasn't what I wanted to say. It felt good to have you say that, you said try to bring the truth out more. It seemed like you were listening and you could understand me in a way. You knew I was holding something back cause the essay didn't sound right with my conclusion that I had.

Like Patty, Tina also struggled with the shame she felt about her past. She wanted to write her story about surviving domestic violence, but she was also afraid of what the other students in her class would think about her. My response to her and her essay supported her as she resisted her shame and brought her story into the classroom. I drew on an emotivist discourse to support her as a writer and she took up that discourse. She claimed:

> I don't like people knowing my personal life. I'm a little ashamed of it. Some people don't know what it's like and they might think something of it and make up the wrong impression on me. You were able to bring out my confidence more saying it's OK to say it and not to worry because it's better to bring it out instead of keeping it all inside where it could torment me more.

She also found my pedagogy transformative as I encouraged her not only to connect the personal to the academic but to also place the personal within a sociocultural context:

> I wouldn't really think outside what I had to write down. At first, I was like whatever but then throughout the course I was able to bring up other subjects that were going around me. I was able to put it down and relate it to all different things: making connections and relating it to other things not just me. I think it was because of you. You were helping us out, telling us to put in more and if you could relate it to something else how would you do that. You wrote ideas and made us think further from those ideas.

Patty and Tina described my pedagogy as integral to the writing they did about their experiences of violence. Their descriptions suggest that the way I wielded my institutional authority as the teacher in the classroom gave them the support they needed to disrupt the dominant cultural discourses on survivors of violence. Drawing on a feminist narrativist discourse, I welcomed their stories and encouraged them to tell the truth of their experience. I offered them access to an alternative discourse to traditional academic discourses as well as to the familial, cultural and institutional discourses they had taken up which positioned stories about surviving violence as unacceptable in a public domain like the classroom. By giving them control over their literacy practices I built trust and respect; they felt heard and supported as they struggled to articulate what had been silenced and shamed. While the connections I asked for between the personal and the academic provided the opportunity for Patty and Tina to bring their stories into the classroom, according to Tina, they also pushed them to think in new ways and to understand their experience as more than "just me." Contextualizing experiences of violence and coming to understand them as about more than the individual can offer

survivors of violence subject positions within a feminist discourse from which to deny the dominant discourses that define survivors as complicit in the violence done to them and that define violence in private domains as a result of individual or familial dysfunction.

My pedagogy encouraged Tina and Patty to bring their individual stories of experiences of violence into the classroom and to connect those stories to alternative discourses. These practices transformed their sense of self as they wrote against the silence and shame they had brought with them into their College Writing course. Patty and Tina "remind us that creating a protected space where survivors can speak their truth is an act of liberation. They remind us that bearing witness, even within the confines of that sanctuary, is an act of solidarity" (Herman, 1997, p. 247). The descriptions Patty and Tina gave of transformative writing suggest that teachers in the writing classroom can play an important role in mitigating the consequences of violence by opening the curriculum to students who desire to write about experiences of violence, giving students control over their literacy practices and making available alternative discourses on what it means to survive violence.

The participants in this study defined several aspects of my pedagogy as enabling them to write for transformation. The way that I taught opened the space in the College Writing classroom for them to write in ways that changed them. According to participants, I contributed to creating a classroom environment where they felt valued and respected. I also helped to create an environment where they felt safe enough to bring their stories and their emotions and to tell the truth of their experience. Taking up a critical discourse on institutional power, I did not grade their essays which shifted my

identity as a teacher to a less authoritative position; therefore, my comments during conferences and on their written essays took on a tone of suggestion instead of demand. I centered the writing workshops and held participants responsible for the workshop process causing participants to claim, as Shane did, that I was part of the class but somehow not. I challenged participants to think beyond their personal experience by questioning them about the contexts that surrounded their writing, even the most personal writing.

The ways in which participants described my pedagogy suggest that the relationship built between a teacher and her students comprises one of the most important components of a classroom that supports transformative writing. Just as participants described the importance of the connection between students in the classroom, they also described the importance of the connection between me and them. Their descriptions suggest that my investment in them as writers played an essential role in the transformative writing they did for the course. They felt that the writing they did mattered to me; they also felt like they mattered to me. They were right. I could encourage them to tell their stories and express their emotions because I was committed to reading those stories and witnessing their emotions about them. My comments spoken during conferences and written on their essays came from a genuine place of inquiry. I wanted to know more about how they constructed their experience and the beliefs and assumptions they drew on to do so. Their desire for articulation met my desire to read what they had to write. My desire to open a space for them to write with purpose met their desire to write in ways that meant something to them. When I listened to them in their interviews, I had the sense that they connected to me because I also connected to

them; they invested in the course because I also invested in the course. Together we made writing for transformation possible through the College Writing curriculum.

The participants in this study contribute to a greater understanding of the role of the teacher in writing for transformation in college composition. The discourses in the literature refer to teachers as facilitating writing for transformation: helping to create safe space, to push students to examine and reflect on their experience and to embrace conflict and dissonance. As a researcher, I was struck by how participants described my institutional authority as a teacher and its role in shaping the practice of writing for transformation. From the interviews with participants, I had the sense that my pedagogy had a great deal to do with creating a context where participants could write in ways that changed them. Participants described the ways I used my institutional authority as enabling them to express their emotions and write their stories. They also described the way I used my authority to encourage them to experiment and to push their thinking as transformative, especially my grading policy and the practice of student self-evaluation and assessment.

Participants in this study suggest that teachers play a primary role in how writing transforms students in college composition because teachers often have most of the ability to decide what kinds of writing will be done in the classroom, what range of emotions will be expressed and what stories will be told and heard. While the participants in this study did not mention the writing program or the university, their descriptions of my pedagogy have implications for the institutional practice of writing. Only by drawing on multiple discourses will a teacher be able to create a classroom that embraces writing for transformation since each student will bring diverse desires and

need a teacher who can hold the space for the expression of those desires. The writing programs and institutions which support composition teachers must give those teachers the ability to construct their classrooms in ways that allow for the complex discoursal diversity needed in order for students to write for transformation.

The writing programs and the institutions that support teachers hold much of the power to determine what discourses enter the writing classroom. As a teacher, I was able to draw on multiple discourses to design the curriculum I taught because the writing program and the university for which I teach draws on discourses that give Teaching Associates the space to make decisions about how they teach College Writing. I could resist the institutional discourses on writing the participants in this study had taken up prior to College Writing through the curriculum I taught because the writing program and the university did not compel me to take up any specific discourses. As a feminist poststructuralist, I had a vested interest in disrupting the institutional discourses participants had taken up which denied the writing of individual experience, ideas and emotions in an academic context because of my beliefs about the transformative possibilities of crossing the borders between the personal and the academic. I also invested myself in challenging the status quo by offering students access to critical and poststructuralist discourses. The Writing Program and the university supported my teaching practice by giving me the authority to construct the course according to my ontological and epistemological beliefs, so I could teach in ways that helped to create a context for writing for transformation for the participants in this study.

The Classroom Environment

According to eleven participants, the classroom environment played an integral role in writing for transformation during their College Writing course. While the curriculum offered participants the literacy practices they needed to write for transformation, participants indicated they wrote in transformative ways because the classroom environment supported this practice. The participants in this study felt safe and comfortable in the classroom. They felt like they received compassion and respect from the other students in the classroom. Participants felt a sense of connection and trust in the classroom as well as a sense of authority and control over their writing processes. Some of the participants also named the diversity in the classroom as important to being able to write for transformation because it gave them a sense that their difference would be embraced. While participants described feeling safe in the classroom, they also described a sense that they could be more fully present in the classroom because feeling safe came from a respect for difference and the ability to connect with other students through sharing their writing even as they may not have shared similar backgrounds or beliefs. They also claimed that the classroom environment supported them as they wrote with passion. They described the excitement in the classroom and the fun they had writing with others as important to writing for transformation. The classroom environment also allowed participants to let go of their inhibitions about academic writing. They released many of their fears about writing and sharing their writing, about revealing themselves, their ideas and their emotions to others and about telling the truth of their experience.

AnnMarie described the classroom environment as integral to writing about the topics most important to her. She had experienced writing in the classroom before College Writing which provided little space for students to share their writing with each other or with their teacher. She claimed that not sharing her writing inhibited her as a writer. She stated:

> I had a class before that was actually an autobiography class. All the papers we wrote about had to be about you, but it was just like you wrote it, handed it in, here's your grade. That's it. You never talked about it, and it made me not want to write about something so important to me.

She found the College Writing classroom enabled her to write about the topics most important to her. She claimed, "The atmosphere of our class, being able to share and stuff, made a huge difference." By taking up the emotivist and narrativist discourses offered by the College Writing curriculum and my pedagogy, AnnMarie constructed a writing practice which allowed her to write about her experience and emotions. She stated, "we actually got to talk about what it was like to write about something so emotionally filled." She defined the writing workshop as the literacy practice within the classroom that most created an environment conducive to writing for transformation. She specifically connected the relationships she built with the other students in her writing workshop groups to her ability to write about topics of importance to her. She stated:

> Everyone has things in their life that mean a lot to them and to someone else it might not mean anything like it might not be a big deal, but I just think we didn't take away from that, especially in our groups. Everyone's stories were so different, but everyone was just so responsible, so caring and passionate about what you were writing about and they'd really care to hear about it. You could tell they were listening, and they'd talk to you about it. If we didn't do that and then after the first paper I noticed that I wouldn't have written the same papers I wrote. I probably would have thought of something less intrusive on me. The class gave me an opportunity to write about pretty much what I was feeling: this is what I thought, and this is what I want to write about, and I didn't have to think twice about it.

For AnnMarie, the classroom environment opened the space for her to write about the topics that mattered to her. Writing about what mattered to her began the process of writing for transformation. Sharing her writing with other invested students and having the time and space to discuss the topics about which she wrote provided AnnMarie with the environment she needed to write in ways that changed her.

Kirsten also defined the classroom environment as one of the reasons why she wrote for transformation. She spoke in her interview about the first day of class and its role in creating the classroom environment. On the first day, I asked students to share their fears and hopes for the class. Kirsten described that process as helping her to feel safe and comfortable in the classroom and to let go of some of her fear about being judged. She stated:

> I felt on the first day what was really unique was everybody voiced their fears the first day. Somehow an environment was created. It was probably questions you asked. An environment was created to where everybody felt comfortable enough to open up and say, "I'm afraid or I feel like I can't write. I want to learn how to write better. I want to learn how to express myself better." I'm reading this on the board, and I'm thinking this is the exact same thing that I would write. You want acceptance. You want to feel better about your writing. That right there did a lot for me. I immediately felt that I wasn't going to be judged. By the time I left the first night, I felt better. I realized everybody was in the same boat I was.

She also talked about the challenge of the writing and the pleasure of working with the other students in the class as important to creating a classroom environment where she felt equal to other writers:

> I think we had a good class. The personalities were very good. Everybody wanted to talk and share. The writing we were doing really made us think and it was interesting and it was something we all could talk about. We all had information to share and it was completely different but we all had something in common. We could share information and I would dare say that most everybody felt really comfortable. The groups were very non-judgmental and you could share information with them and they would give you advice, hints, what sounded good, what didn't sound good, and it was just very relaxed and fun. I felt equal

> throughout the whole class. I felt like we were all colleagues just sharing information and trying to help each other, like a workshop instead of the mundane class.

According to her, the classroom environment enabled her to write in new ways. She felt that the students in the class needed each other and could honestly express themselves. She stated:

> It was such an incredible experience for me. I think it was a combination of a lot of things. Everything in that class allowed me to release something, and I just don't have anywhere near the amount of stress that I had. We all needed each other and we were all equal. We needed each other's critique. We needed each other to be honest, which is not always easy to do. That seemed to flow very easy too. People didn't have a hard time being honest and people didn't have a hard time receiving the honesty. I had experiences in that class that I wouldn't normally have had because I felt the environment was comfortable and safe. I could express my opinions.

The classroom environment of College Writing changed Kirsten's expectations for future classes. It also changed how she understands herself as a writer:

> The experience has left me feeling good enough to where instead of going into a future writing class or whatever class I take that may involve writing, instead of automatically feeling inferior, I won't feel that way. The next thing instead of feeling like I'm going to be judged, I'm going to judge that class. The classes from here on out are going to have to at least half way meet the standard of College Writing. It's kind of set a standard of the way I want the rest of the writing classes to go.

The course shifted her subject position so that she no longer assumed herself deficient as a writer. Previous to College Writing, she had taken up the subject position of "bad writer" through the discourses her teachers had used to assess her writing as less than average. Her description of her future expectations for writing in the classroom represents a shift in power: instead of being afraid of judgment, she now positions herself as able to judge. She learned in the course to value and respect her ability to write by writing in an environment that she described as "comfortable and safe" as well as honest

and equitable. The classroom provided her with an environment to write for transformation and that writing changed her sense of self and her writer identity.

Preety was in the same class as Kirsten, and she also found the classroom environment instrumental to writing in transformative ways. She described the class as inviting her to express herself and to be present. She claimed:

> The classroom environment was really nice. I really liked it. Sometimes I go to classes and I feel so dumb and uncomfortable. Sometimes the way a teacher presents things is confusing and kind of intimidating and not really welcoming. But this class, I felt I could say things I wanted to say, talk to people and just be myself.

Preety defined the diversity of students in the class as important to creating a classroom environment that felt positive:

> There was a lot of variety of people, from different schools too. When they were presenting things, it would just come from their experiences and in that class a lot of people lived outside of the country. You would get other perspectives on the same thing. The diversity had a lot to do with the positive things that happened in the class because we were equally diverse in gender and race and class and nationality.

She also enjoyed being in the classroom and sharing her writing with other students. She felt excited by the essays she wrote in the course and excited to learn what others thought of her writing. She stated:

> I got to know a lot of people's writings personally. We were just there and talking. We were actually doing the work because it was fun. We all had a different style of writing. It was amazing. I was excited to share my writing because the topics I chose were really interesting to me. I wanted know how they felt about those topics. Their writing style was interesting and I wanted to know how they thought about my writing. Somehow there was this vibe that I could share. This class, I was like I can share my writing.

Having experienced feeling "dumb and uncomfortable" and often "intimidated" in other classrooms, Preety described the classroom environment of College Writing as one of the reasons why she wrote for transformation. She felt safe in the College Writing classroom

and this allowed her to write about topics which mattered to her and to share her writing with less fear. I would also argue that the diversity of the other students in the classroom contributed to the ability of Preety to write for transformation as she found herself among other students of color who also had international backgrounds.

According to many participants, the classroom environment played a critical role in their ability to write for transformation. Similar to AnnMarie, each participant stated that multiple aspects of the classroom environment worked together to create a space where they could write in ways that meant a great deal to them. Writing about what mattered to them built the foundation for writing in ways that changed them. Participants felt comfortable and safe in the classroom. This comfort and safety allowed them to take the risks necessary to articulate their ideas and express themselves and their emotions. Participants felt equal to other students in the classroom and believed each of them had something to offer to the class. They came to respect other students and their different ideas and experiences through the practice of the writing workshops which fostered connection and compassion: sharing and caring. Participants stated they had fun in the classroom and enjoyed the writing they did which created an environment that motivated them to write well.

As participants invested themselves in their writing and in the course, they wrote in ways that changed their sense of self, their writer identities and the way they write. Through taking up the discourses offered to them through the College Writing curriculum, the participants in this study helped construct a classroom environment which supported them by giving them the space to write about what mattered to them, a space to voice and overcome their fears about writing and the space to write with passion.

Participants felt accepted in the classroom and valued by those around them. Their descriptions of the classroom environment suggest that writing for transformation may require a relational process built on a responsive, caring and passionate connection to others. Their descriptions of the classroom environment also suggest that the dynamics of the classroom play an essential role in creating the context for the possibility of writing for transformation.

How Does Writing Transform?

In the literature on writing and transformation, teachers and researchers across discourses support similar literacy practices to write for transformation; however, the purpose of these literacy practices differs depending on which discourses teachers and researchers draw on to construct their understanding of transformative writing. The teachers and researchers who draw on emotivist discourse claim creative writing as the most transformative literacy practice. They believe creative writing to be the best way for writers to emote and connect to their emotions. Through practices like journal writing, writers can explore their emotions and discover themselves. Many emotivists, poets and poetry therapists also believe that language has an inherent healing quality that has to do with the "essence" of language: "sound, metaphor, image, feeling and rhythm" (Fox, 1997, p. 3). Experimenting and playing with language can offer writers a practice that "strengthens the healer" through emotional expression. According to the teachers and researchers who draw on emotivist discourse, "putting our feelings onto the clean white page of healing" (Rico, 1991, p. xii) transforms writers. As a teacher, I drew on emotivist discourse by assigning journal writing to students and encouraging them to

explore and experiment with their language: the form and content of their essays. I also encouraged students to express their emotions on paper and in the classroom.

The teachers and researchers who draw on narrativist discourse argue that the practice of writing autobiography transforms writers. Through constructing narratives writers may create a linear, coherent storyline that changes how they understand themselves and their pasts (Pennebaker, 1997, 2004). Narrativists also suggest that writing autobiography allows writers to challenge oppressive cultural narratives and may provide a literacy practice to create alternative narratives like collective stories that resist dominant narratives. Unlike emotivists, narrativists emphasize the importance of audience when describing how writing transforms; writing for transformation involves not only writing autobiography but also sharing it with others. I drew on narrativist discourse by assigning students to read and write personal narrative and by emphasizing the importance of telling life stories. I also implemented writing workshops that focused on writing and sharing autobiographies.

Like narrativists, social constructivists invite students to write autobiography. They also implement writing workshops as a way to get students talking about the stories in their lives so that they may come to see their stories and themselves as socially-constructed through the connections they make with other students in the classroom. However, social constructivists consider writing autobiography and implementing writing workshops as a first step toward writing for transformation. For social constructivists, transformative writing involves social action. They create writing assignments that require students to cross the borders between the classroom and the social world outside of the classroom, for example, writing to politicians on a social issue or writing letters to

the editor. Social constructivist teachers also encourage students to write for their own purposes which may include writing outside of the requirements of a college composition curriculum. Feminist social constructivists implement writing practices that challenge dominant discourses on the body, emotions, knowledge and power. Like emotivists, they believe emotions integral to writing for transformation; however, while emotivists advocate for emotional expression, feminist social constructivists advocate for emotional expression as well as the critical examination of the constitutive nature of such expression. I took up a feminist social constructivist discourse mostly during the writing of the research essays by encouraging students to investigate the important issues in their lives through their research and writing and to connect those issues to larger social contexts.

Teachers and researchers who draw on poststructuralist discourse share many of the same beliefs about how writing transforms with social constructivists; therefore, they also integrate many of the same classroom literacy practices. They assign students to write autobiography as a place to begin; they implement critical writing workshops; they encourage students to investigate their literacy practices and to write for their own purposes, and they create writing assignments that challenge dominant discourses on knowledge and power. The difference between social constructivist teachers and poststructuralist teachers lies in the focus of the change they desire. While social constructivists encourage students to become aware of the social construction of their identities, poststructuralists work more toward students coming to understand the power of language and the discoursal construction of their subjectivities. As a feminist poststructuralist teacher, I used literacy practices in the classroom to deconstruct

dominant discourses, to make available alternative discourses and to offer students agentic subject positions through their language practices.

The participants in this study drew on multiple discourses to define how writing transformed them during their College Writing course. Participants aligned themselves with the discourses in the literature on writing and transformation in many ways. Each of the discourses in the literature claims that writing with fewer adherences to traditional academic conventions enables writing for transformation and having the space to explore opens the possibility for transformative writing; participants affirmed these claims. Participants also drew on emotivist discourse to describe journal writing as a transformative literacy practice; they drew on narrativist discourse to describe some of the transformative aspects of writing autobiography. Many participants also drew on social constructivist discourse as they described how writing their research essays helped them to understand themselves and their experience as socially-constructed and to challenge the status quo on the topics about which they wrote. Some participants also aligned themselves with poststructuralist discourse when they described the literacy practices in the course as positioning them as Subjects, as definers, knowers and thinkers, able to resist dominant discourses and to examine institutional and cultural constructs of knowledge and power.

Many of the participants also confirmed the findings of the experimental research on writing and transformation which posits a connection between narrative and emotion (Esterling, L'Abate, Murray & Pennebaker, 1999; Greenberg, Stone & Wortman, 1996; Pennebaker, Kiecolt-Glaser & Glaser, 1988; Pennebaker, 1993, 1995, 1997; Smyth, 1998). When describing writing autobiography as a transformative literacy practice,

participants drew on emotivist discourse to suggest that writing narrative and sharing it with others had as much to do with writing emotions as it did with writing story. The participants who described journal writing as transformative indicated that one of the reasons writing in the journal changed them was because it helped them to achieve coherence. These descriptions of writing autobiography and writing in the journal merge emotivist and narrativist discourse and suggest that each literacy practice may transform writers in similar ways: by bringing together emotion and narrative. Much of the experimental research on writing and healing has found that writers achieve the most health benefits from writing that not only constructs narrative about past events but also expresses emotions about those events. The participants in this study would seem to support the findings of this research.

Participants in this study also make several contributions to understanding how writing transforms writers in college composition. While participants completed the same College Writing curriculum, they each engaged with the literacy practices of that curriculum in different ways. Each participant brought together the literacy practices that most met their needs to write for transformation. This suggests that how writing transforms writers differs for each writer. It also suggests that writing curricula must offer various literacy practices to students if teachers want to support writing for transformation; teachers must draw on multiple discourses to construct the literacy practices of a writing course as well as hold the classroom space for any discourses students may bring with them. No one discourse can provide students with the literacy practices to write for transformation.

Participants in this study also contribute to the conversation about the institutional divide between the personal and the academic. They challenge those that claim the personal should be excluded from the classroom to protect students. During their interviews, participants stated that they made decisions about when and how they brought the personal into the classroom. They used their journal to write about the personal they did not want to share and they shared what they desired to make public through their essays. As Natasha stated in her second interview, "if it still bothers you, if it still hurts, you don't bring it into the classroom." Participants also defined literacy practices that crossed the divide between the personal and the academic as the most transformative: writing autobiography, writing research that connects to the personal, writing the journal and the writing workshops. They seem to indicate that one of the primary reasons these literacy practices changed them had to do with the inclusion of the personal in their academic writing and the inclusion of the personal in the classroom. Even writing the journal, the most private and personal literacy practice in the course, appeared to offer participants a liminal space to make connections between the personal, the sociocultural and the political.

The participants in this study used each transformative literacy practice to bridge "that gap that is falsely created between personal and academic knowledge" (Herrington, 2002, p. 236). The emotivist and narrativist discourses in the literature on writing and transformation claim that writing the personal through emotion and story transforms writers. The participants in this study concur. I would argue that participants also challenge the social constructivist and poststructuralist discourses to reconsider writing the personal as anything less than political. Most of the participants in this study defined

writing the personal as the most transformative literacy practice. They did not define it as transformative because they desired to uncritically, easily meet a writing requirement. They defined it as transformative because writing the personal shifted their sense of self in a crucial, life-affirming way; it gave them a way to reclaim a sense of self that felt more complete, more articulate and more able. Many social constructivists and poststructuralists claim writing the personal as only the beginning to writing that transforms and argue that students must be pushed further to critically examine the social, discursive world. Most of the participants in this study suggest that writing the personal may already be critical examination because it offers them a literacy practice that resists dominant discourses that have silenced them. Writing from the first person, from the Subject position, represents taking up an alternative discourse for most of the participants in this study because of their experiences in the social world of having aspects of their subjectivity denied: their stories, their emotions and their ideas. How writing transforms a writer depends on the writer and the literacy practices made available to them. For the participants in this study, the College Writing curriculum transformed them by offering them literacy practices that met their desires and liberated them from many of the conventions of traditional academic writing and encouraged them to take up the Subject position within their written discourse.

The Textual Practice of Writing for Transformation

To better understand how participants wrote for transformation, I analyzed each of the participant texts included in this dissertation. I coded each text for traces of discourses – places within the texts where each participant drew on discourses to construct their sense of self, their experience, their emotions and their ideas. In

particular, I coded for "I-statements," metaphors and places where participants connected their individual experience, emotions and ideas to larger contexts. In this section, I will focus on the discourses participants drew on the most as well as those that connect to how participants described and defined writing for transformation. Within the texts written for the course participants did not reference writing and transformation. Their interviews suggest that the texts participants wrote for the course transformed them not because they wrote about writing and transformation but because the discourses they drew on in their texts transformed their sense of self and their writer identity. In many ways, participants drew on discourses in their texts that allowed them to position themselves as having power and knowledge: as writers who know about that which they wrote. Participants explicitly drew on discourses in their written texts when asserting truth claims about reality. For example, Patty drew on a discourse of Romantic love when she stated in her essay, "If you love someone once, and I mean really love them, then you will love them always." AnnMarie positioned herself within a contemporary sociocultural discourse on achievement and success when she stated her motto as "just do it" representing herself as someone who sets her goals and accomplishes them through action. She wrote:

> I worked extremely hard and never let anything stop me from what I wanted to achieve. I never let anyone tell me I couldn't do something or that something was beyond me. Once I put my mind to it I worked at it until I got it.

Most participants explicitly invested themselves within their texts in specific discourses that represented themselves and the social world in ways that affirmed each participant's sense of self and their understanding of reality: as they would like others to see them and the world around them. In some cases, participants aligned themselves with discourses in more implicit ways but for similar purposes. For instance, in her autobiography on Christmas Julia implicitly draws on discourses of social class, race and gender to

represent "home for the holidays" as commonplace instead of a highly constructed familial and religious practice specific to middle-class, mainstream White American culture. She asserts in her text, "our traditions will always prevail" and leaves little doubt in her essay that the way she celebrates Christmas is how Christmas is celebrated aligning herself with dominant American discourses on the holiday.

The participants who identified writing autobiography as the most transformative writing took up subject positions within liberal humanist discourse. While each of them wrote stories about different events in their lives, they each followed a similar narrative pattern: an event occurred; the event changed their life; they survived and overcame the adversity the event presented to them; they learned from their experience and "moved on." I would argue that this narrative pattern gave each of these participants a sense of coherence and control over their past. Each participant also drew on the dominant American discourse on survival which premises itself on liberal humanist discourse. This discourse on survival encourages a short time for the expression of emotions and the rapid assimilation of experience as an opportunity for learning as well as no disruption in progressing forward with life. Each participant who identified writing autobiography as transformative aligned themselves with this discourse in their text. However, there are moments in each text where participants disrupt this discourse by expressing a desire for a different past.

Some express regret; some express a sense that they still experience pain from the events in their past. According to the autobiographies written by participants, they continue to feel emotions about the events in their pasts, and they recognize that the events have changed them in ways that shifted their sense of self. For instance, Tina

wrote at the end of her essay, "I really wish I didn't have to go through this. I've gained strength and independence, but I've also lost my ability to trust people. It will take time to actually put this in the past and move on." I would argue that writing autobiography represents a moment of resistance to the dominant discourse on survival by allowing participants a space to feel their emotions a little longer and to inscribe the events in their past as more than a learning experience. The dominant discourse on survival represents emotions as fleeting and almost unnecessary and past events as separate from the present. Participants challenge this discourse through their texts by claiming emotions about the past as somewhat omnipresent and integral to their sense of self and align themselves with emotivist discourse. They also represent the past as very much a part of the present and take up a narrativist discourse which claims that writing for transformation involves the writing of the past to construct a present.

I would also argue that writing autobiography offers a space for participants to take up subject positions within the dominant discourse on survival so that they may represent themselves as strong and capable of success. They show themselves as having overcome the obstacles about which they wrote which connects to them having claimed the writing they did in the course as increasing their confidence in their sense of self. Writing autobiography offers them a space to construct an alternative discourse which incorporates the dominant discourse on survival but also allows participants to represent more of themselves and their experience and emotions than the dominant discourse would seem to allow. For example, Kirsten draws on the dominant discourse on survival in her autobiography by stating, "I would say I'm the person who people say is brave, strong and a survivor," but she ends her essay with "what I am the most is a person sitting

at the head of a huge table looking for her parents." She may have survived the violence in her life, overcome her struggle with addiction and learned from her experience and moved forward with her life, but she also longs for a different past. The discourse she constructs in which to place her story complicates the dominant discourse on survival by claiming the process of transformation and healing as continuous and full of emotion even years later and as always changing and never complete: a discourse which helps her to accept her emotions and her process of healing. Through writing autobiography for the course, participants also constructed an alternative discourse to the traditional discourses they had taken up on academic writing. They constructed a discourse that asserts the value of writing the personal in an academic context as well as their right to do so.

The participants who identified writing the research essay or the text-wrestling essay as transformative drew on discourses to position themselves as authorities on the topics about which they wrote. By positioning themselves as authorities on their topics, each of these participants also took up subject positions within the discourses they drew on which represented themselves in ways similar to those participants who identified writing autobiography as transformative: as survivors, as strong, capable and intelligent. For example, through drawing on the dominant medical-psychological discourse on Bipolar Disorder Natasha positioned herself as overcoming misdiagnosis. Brittney drew on a discourse of individuality to position herself as more enlightened than her peers, and Zackary positioned himself in a similar way through drawing on a liberal humanist discourse. Shane wrote himself as having his eyes open while others remained blind by positioning himself with authority within a discourse on enlightenment. He wrote:

> We as humans will and are saved upon our rebirth. Once reborn, our arrogant, naïve ways shall be cast off and the world will save us as we save each other. For it is the world that spawned us, gave us what we have and allows us to continue. The world sees that a rare few have been reborn and enlightened; it is with these few that we shall be made aware and saved. Life is what one makes it; why make it as we have? Life instead should be embraced and cherished. Why not see just how much we can make of life rather than taking life and wasting it?

The participants who identified writing genres other than autobiography as transformative wrote themselves as they would like to be seen which I would argue allowed them to see themselves as they want to be and, in many ways, may account for the transformation they attributed to the writing they did in the course.

The discourses each participant drew on in their texts seemed to connect to the kinds of transformation they described as having taken place in the course. For example, Preety wrote her research essay to demonstrate the prevalence of sexism in American culture and its impact on women. She used the pronoun "we" in her text to position herself with the women she writes about as being discriminated against in higher education. She stated in her essay, "It is important for all women to be aware of the sexism that exists. Otherwise, we will always be labeled as the defective sex, and we will always be discriminated against just because of our sex." By drawing on a liberal feminist discourse to advocate for women to fight for equality, Preety takes up a subject position within this discourse which positions her as a woman with agency. She claims writing during College Writing as transformative because she became more confident in her ability as a writer and as a student; she found herself more able to express her ideas in the classrooms she entered after the course. She wrote her essay encouraging women to take up more active roles in their education to resist gender discrimination in the classroom, and she found herself doing just that after writing her essay. The connection between the essay she wrote and the change she identified in her life applies to other

participants as well. Each participant wrote about the experience, emotions or ideas that transformed for them in the course. In their texts, they expressed desires that they then claimed in their interviews to have lived in their lives suggesting a connection between writing about transformation and enacting it. For example, Patty wrote in her essay about her struggle to trust others:

> I still struggle getting truly personal with people in my life, and I often treat some people badly for mistakes they haven't made. I don't cry anymore. My life is getting better by the day. I have been able to move on, although the progress is at times slow and tedious, and I have been able to talk openly about this for the first time. I want those who have never been exposed to rape to know about it. I kept it a secret for a long time. Not only did that secret keep me from being more personal with my friends, it kept me from getting close to anyone.

She then spoke during her interview about her belief that writing about being raped during the course transformed her by helping her to heal and allowing her to trust others more.

Participants wrote about the experiences and ideas that mattered the most to them. They wrote about the events that changed them and the ideologies that shaped them. They also wrote about their desires for themselves and their worlds to be different: their desires for transformation. Each piece of writing identified by participants as transformative expresses the desire for change. Writing this desire transformed participants as they put language to their stories and their thoughts and opinions deconstructing and reconstructing their knowledge and beliefs. They also used their writing to shift their identities and to build relationships with others. Writing during the course allowed participants to position themselves as the people and as the writers they desired to be. Each participant drew on the discourses they needed to represent themselves and their social worlds in ways that affirmed their sense of self and allowed them to enact the change they wanted to see in their lives.

CHAPTER 6

WHY DID WRITING TRANSFORM?

Introduction

The reasons why writing transformed participants (see Table 3) depended on the purposes for which they wrote during the course. Many of the participants wrote to make sense of their experience and emotions. They claimed writing made their experience seem more real and their sense of self more complete; it helped them to understand their experience and to make sense of themselves. For those participants who wrote about experiences that they felt marginalized them, writing in the classroom helped them to represent themselves and their experience as normal and reduced their sense of alienation and stigma. Some participants wrote because it was the only thing they claimed to be able to do with their experience, and the writing got them past moments where they felt trapped by the events in their lives. Many participants wrote to get something out and to share it with others. For some, writing transformed them because they got their fear out. Writing also gave participants the space to get their stories out, to examine them, reflect and let go. Some saw their words as taking up space as they got them out and putting their words into the world changed their sense of self. Writing helped others to break a silence and to resist shame. It helped them to feel less alone and less secretive. For many participants, the writing they did in the course transformed them because they wrote to express their emotions, and this expression changed their sense of self. Others claimed the writing they did during the course transformed them because they became better writers. They claimed they learned how to write which helped them to feel more

articulate and less "dumb." Some of the participants identified the writing they did in the course as transformative because it was therapeutic and healing, and it gave them voice.

Made Sense of Experience and Emotions

Nine of the participants wrote their essays in College Writing about events and experiences that had changed them. Eight of them identified writing about these events and experiences as transformative. According to these participants, writing helped them make sense of their experience and their feelings about their experience. I coded this reason why writing transformed participants differently than writing to emote. When participants described writing to emote, they drew primarily on emotivist discourse to describe the emotional expression they experienced while they wrote and the changes this expression enacted. When participants described writing to make sense of experience and emotions, they drew mostly on narrativist discourse to define the coherence writing seemed to offer them: a way to understand an event and to articulate what felt inexplicable.

AnnMarie used her writing before the course and during the course to transform her experience of being injured during cheerleading practice. She talked about the importance of writing to her recovery process during her interview. For her, writing was the thing to do. It helped her to better understand her experience of being injured. She stated:

> I remember as soon as I got home from the hospital like within two days I had written in my journal just cause so much was going on in my head. Even writing about the accident now, every time I write about it, I figure out something or feel something different. Writing about it is probably the only way I can really deal with it. The writing about it makes it real. It makes my emotions make sense.

Her life drastically changed because of her injury. She could no longer cheerlead, which was an integral part of her identity. She claimed, "My identity was cheerleading. I didn't

think I was a person without it." She also felt stigmatized by and ashamed of being in a wheelchair while she recovered and being less able-bodied than the athlete she had been. She stated, "Because I was in a wheelchair not only did I feel weaker, but I didn't like how people were going to look at me because I was in a wheelchair." Writing helped her recover a sense of self by offering her a language practice from which to position herself as normal. Writing her experience also gave her a sense of control as well as a space to have her experience not "make perfect sense." She stated:

> I just had to try and be as normal as I could and forget, move on from things. Instead of it just stuck in your head, you explain it the way you want to explain it, and you say it how you want to say it. It just kind of comes out when you write, and it doesn't have to make perfect sense.

Writing in the course helped AnnMarie to understand her injury better: why it happened and what it meant to her sense of self and her future. She got the story of her experience out of her head and onto paper and, through her words, made sense of her experience as she wrote it the way she wanted it to be. I would argue that being injured and being unable to cheerlead left AnnMarie feeling out of control: something she highly valued had been taken from her. Writing to make sense of this experience and how she felt about it gave her back some sense of control over her life and made it more "real." Her injury disrupted the discoursal construction of her life by forcing her to draw on alternative discourses to the "just do it" discourse she had taken up to construct her sense of self; it forced her to shift her subject position. Writing offered AnnMarie a practice to inhabit alternative subject positions and to deconstruct and shape her sense of self.

Similar to AnnMarie, Michael believed that writing was the thing to do to make sense of his experience. After being in New York City on September 11, 2001, Michael struggled to make sense of his experience and to reconcile the consequences of that

experience on his life and on the world. His experience in the city on the day of the World Trade Center attacks left him struggling to tell the truth about his life and the events of that day. Writing transformed his experience by helping him to examine the chaos and violence of his experience and to feel more in control and connected to reality. He stated in his interview:

> Writing helped me get a better grasp on everything that occurred and to articulate it. I just want it to all make sense. I just want to be honest. I just want to be true. This is how I really feel and this is what I'm going to live. I couldn't pretend like it didn't happen. I had to do something with it and to write about it was probably the best thing I could do. It helped me see everything better to be able to write it all out and look at it and reflect.

In his portfolio review, Michael also wrote about the therapeutic aspect of writing to make sense of his experience and emotions. He found writing during the class helped him to grow and helped him get through a difficult time in his life. He claimed:

> This class was extremely therapeutic for me. Whether it was through essays, free writes or journal entries, this class provided me with an opportunity to articulate my thoughts, feelings and opinions on everything that was happening outside of the classroom. As I grew as a person, I also grew as a writer. This semester and this class have taught me the true importance of writing and what value it has. Writing can help me through times of difficulty in a way like no other.

Each of the literacy practices in the course offered Michael a way to make sense of his experience and his "thoughts, feelings and opinions" on that experience. Writing helped him to "see everything better" and made his experience more real. It also gave him a literacy practice to help him heal from what happened to him in New York City.

Making sense of experience and emotions through writing caused participants to shift their perspective in ways they found transformative. Most often they wrote about experiences that had been painful to live. Writing about these experiences helped participants to see their past and themselves in ways that allowed them to move forward with more confidence and less fear. Their writing gave them more of a sense of

acceptance of themselves and the past. They put experiences that had felt overwhelming into writing and in doing so regained some measure of control. According to participants, the writing of their experience made it feel more real, more coherent and less fragmented. Participant descriptions of making sense of their experience and emotions through written language would suggest that writing transforms because it can help writers to see their lives in new ways that change chaos to form: a narrativist definition of transformation.

Got It Out There and Shared It with Others

Six participants described one of the reasons why writing during the course transformed them as getting it out there. According to them, writing gave them the ability to move their stories and their emotions from inside of them to outside of them: a shift that describes the crossing of the border between the private and the public but also the border between an internal thought process and the external written word: from in their head to out onto paper where participants could see their words. Drawing on an emotivist discourse, these participants described the process most attributed to writing as a way to heal from the past: a process of acceptance and release so that memories do not inhibit individual growth. As AnnMarie stated:

> So much goes on in your head and you're just like "get it out." When you write about it, then you can see it. Obviously I've lived it, so I know what happened but when you read it, it's like "oh, yeah."

This shift from inside to outside caused many changes in the participants. For instance, Kirsten spoke of the shift as giving her words substance and space in the world. "Words can be very empty. Releasing them to someone and having them say something, it gives them substance." Kirsten spoke as well about the therapeutic aspect of the writing she did for the course. She described it as lifting a weight from her better than any other

intervention she had known. The confidence she gained in the class helped her to get her story out and to feel good. She claimed:

> As I got more confident about writing, I felt much better about my writing and it was everything. It was the journal. Writing the journal kind of made me take stock of where I was in my head and I wrote more and more and I was like this feels really good. It was almost very therapeutic to write. It feels like a big weight was lifted off that no amount of therapy or medication, nothing could replace.

Similar to Shane, the transformative writing Kirsten did seemed to have a metaphysical dimension to it as though the writing had a life of its own; she described the same sense of something clicking as she wrote her last essay. She stated:

> I wanted to write something like this for a very, very long time, and one night it just kind of clicked, but it came on very rapidly. It was almost like someone else was writing. I stayed up for a long time writing and didn't take the pauses that I always do. I was on a mission, and I wanted to write it.

The students in Kirsten's class expressed a desire to put together a course publication so they could share their writing with everyone in the class. Kirsten went home from class the night before the essay for the publication was due and wrote an autobiography for the publication. This autobiography tells the story of her experiences with her mother's mental illness, her stepmother's violence against her while growing up and Kirsten's struggle with violence and addiction as an adult. According to Kirsten, the story she wrote had gone unwritten for a long time, and the experience of being in College Writing gave her what she needed to finally get it out. She stated:

> This was in me for a very long time. I was just never motivated. It was the experience of the class, being confident and feeling good about writing and just going with it. It was very important mentally and emotionally to just get it out there and for once take a chance.

She also claimed writing her autobiography helped her to feel less alone. Getting her story out there helped her to hear her voice and to see her words as taking up space in the

world. Sharing those words also caused her to feel connected to others. She stated in her second interview:

> I know that when I was writing it and even after I didn't feel so alone. It's almost like when I'm writing, I hear my voice and it makes me feel not so alone. And then when it's out, an essay, writing, it takes up space. It takes up space in the world, and you're just not so alone. Writing is tangible, and it allows other people access. I think it starts off with the simplest things: none of us wants to feel alone and if you read something that even one sentence or one paragraph just strikes a chord in the reader and maybe makes them realize, wow, there's somebody out there that feels the same way I do or went through the same thing I did, it makes you feel not so alone.

Like Michael, Kirsten believed the writing she did in the course changed her sense of self and offered her a therapeutic literacy practice she could use in the future. She stated, "writing this did enrich my identity a little bit. It enhanced my identity. The next time it moves me, I'll write. It really does beat the cost of therapy and the prescriptions." She went on to describe her writing as therapeutic by drawing on the concept of voice and the belief that sharing her writing enhanced its healing properties:

> Just knowing it was out there and somebody read it, it gave me voice. It's therapeutic to write a journal but it takes it one step further to give it to somebody else to read. By having it out there, it was almost like a safe zone. It got out there, and I felt like I got it out there and gave it voice and gave it substance. It was very healing, especially when I was finished and at that moment when it was done. It's a feeling you never lose. The feeling that was produced after I wrote it, that big feeling of, "wow, it's out there" and you being deflated. You don't lose that. Even though you don't think about it everyday. I don't have to deal with this anymore. It's out there.

She also spoke about resisting the survivor discourse in our culture that has shaped much of the public discourses on violence and those who experience it. She stated, "after writing all of this, instead of wanting to be a survivor, I'd rather have a Mom and Dad. I'd rather not be a survivor if I could possibly help it. I just want to understand more." While revising this essay, Kirsten changed the ending of her autobiography from proclaiming herself a survivor to positioning herself as someone who wishes for a

different family and a different past. This discoursal shift exemplifies one of the transformative aspects of writing for Kirsten as she made sense of her experience and took up subject positions within the discourses on violence and addiction through her writing; she wrote her way to a sense of having a voice midst experience that had in many ways silenced her. Drawing on emotivist discourse, she claimed, "releasing it and not having it clogging your cells back there enables you to focus on other things and also to help you feel better about yourself and to realize it's OK. It's OK." Getting her story out there and sharing it with others healed Kirsten in many ways. She heard her voice and gave her words substance and stopped feeling so alone. She released the story she needed to get out and this helped her to feel better about herself and her past. Writing during the course allowed her to bring her history to her present, to accept her experience as part of her story and to integrate her experience into her sense of self.

Like Michael and Kirsten, Tina defined writing as transformative by drawing on the concept of therapy. She also spoke of the importance of sharing her writing with others and letting go of the past. Similar to AnnMarie and Patty, she wrote autobiography to represent herself as strong when the cultural discourses on her experience position her as a victim, therefore, weak. She wrote her story and shared it in the classroom even as she struggled with trusting others and letting them know her past. She wrote in her process letter for her autobiography:

> I told this story because it was sort of therapy for me. This incident was very traumatic for me. I thought by sharing it people would understand where I was coming from and how it affected me. Writing gives me a sense that I can let go of the past and move on. I have a hard time trusting people and letting them come into my life. I like to prove people wrong and be stronger than I really look.

Tina described getting her story out there as therapeutic: a way to let go of the past and move forward into her present. She also described a sense that by sharing her story her readers would know her better. Writing her story and sharing it also challenged her to trust the other students in the class and to let them a little closer to her. She positioned herself as strong in her essay, and she also positioned herself as strong in the class by sharing a story that depicted her survival of a traumatic event in her past.

Those participants who claimed getting it out there and sharing it as one of the reasons why writing transformed them during the course indicated that transformative writing required two components: the writing *and* the sharing. They found putting their words onto paper important to changing their sense of self, but that change drastically increased when they then shared their words with others. According to participants, getting their stories out was healing. No longer only inside, participants felt liberated from having to contain the words that held their stories. Sharing their stories then gave participants the sense that they had a voice and their readers knew them better now that they had read their words. Participants not only had a desire to put their stories into written words, but they also had a desire to share their stories with others to claim their experience and their survival of that experience and to be more known by others. The ways in which participants described the process of getting it out there and sharing it suggest that while writing can offer a space of transformation, being read may play as important a role in writing that transforms for some writers.

Wrote to Emote

Eight participants claimed the expression of emotion as one of the most important reasons why writing transformed them during the course. For Julia, this meant writing

about her memories of the past and expressing her joy in family and friends. For the other participants, writing their emotions transformed them because they had been taught to control the expression of their emotions. When describing their emotional histories and beliefs, each participant drew on the "rhetoric of control" that Lutz (1990) defined in her study on emotion to describe the way in which her participants understood their emotions. She found participants used metaphors to describe emotions that referenced controlling, handling, coping, dealing, disciplining or managing either emotions or the situation seen as creating the emotion. The "rhetoric of control" constructs emotions as universal, natural impulses which exist in healthy and unhealthy forms and come under the control of a medical or quasi-medical profession like psychiatry or psychology. The rhetoric of emotional control also suggests a set of roles – one strong and defensive and the other weak but invasive – that are hierarchized and linked with gender roles (Lutz, 1990, pp. 72-73). Along with being taught to control their emotions, each of the participants in this study who wrote to emote had also been taught to view emotional expression as a weakness. College Writing offered them a space to emote, to resist the "rhetoric of control" and to claim emotional expression as a strength. They wrote their emotions and emoted in resistance to the familial and cultural discourses that position emotions as negative. According to these participants, bringing their emotions into their essays and expressing their emotions gave them the experience of feeling their emotions in a positive way. Many participants claimed it felt good to express themselves even as they struggled with their beliefs that this expression marked them as weak.

Each of the participants who spoke in their interviews about writing to emote also connected emotions to women by claiming emotional expression as feminine. As Lutz

(1990) found in her study on emotion, "any discourse on emotion is also, at least implicitly, a discourse on gender" (p. 69). Most of the participants who wrote to emote had been taught by their families that only women expressed emotions and emotions were unstable, dangerous and a sign of weakness. They also claimed they learned to connect emotions to women through the contemporary representations of emotional expression in cultural forms like television and literature. The female participants who wrote to emote reclaimed emotions as positive. The male participants who wrote their emotions repositioned emotional expression as an important and valuable part of their sense of self. Writing to emote helped both female and male participants to trust themselves more by supporting their individual beliefs in emotional expression as positive even as they had taken up the familial and cultural discourses and practices that denied emotional expression. It also helped them to feel like they knew themselves better as they became connected to their emotions and, through them, connected more deeply to their experience. According to participants, writing their emotions allowed them to open up more to others and to trust people more. As participants came to know themselves better, they also felt as if others knew them better. Expressing their emotions helped participants to feel as if they presented more of themselves in their writing and during the writing workshops. They also felt like others knew them better because they had read and/or witnessed their emotions through the practice of the writing workshops.

Most of the participants who wrote to emote had been taught by their families to control their expression of emotion. AnnMarie talked about this process in her interview. She also spoke about the gendering of emotional expression in her family. She stated:

> I've just been an emotional person all my life, and now I'm better at controlling them. I just won't like burst out crying anywhere but when I was younger that's

> kinda how I was like and my Dad used to tell me, "you can't do that." I always got upset when people would tell me not to express myself. I would get upset when I would see other people not expressing themselves. The women on my Mom's side are very emotional, so I've always seen that. I didn't know my grandmother was like that until within the last few years cause like everyone's always told her you can't be like that or you can't express yourself.

AnnMarie related her father's need to control her emotions with a family history of mental illness:

> I think it has to do with my grandmother who has OCD. Not the grandmother I wrote about, the other grandmother. And it caused like so many family issues I guess even before I was even born and so my Dad always got nervous like he didn't want me to be like my grandmother or something so ever since I was little he was like, "don't be like that, don't get emotional." I couldn't understand that when I was little. Why am I being told not to be upset or whatever it was? It meant a lot to him. He didn't want me to grow up with any sort of problems like my grandmother had and I guess he thought he could control that by telling me like, "stop being emotional, why are you crying?"

She also talked about her need to represent herself to her family as strong which she equated with not expressing emotion because her family views emotional expression as a potential symptom of mental illness. She stated:

> I remember for the longest time not expressing any emotion when I was upset about things like even now where I can tell my Mom and my Dad how something makes me feel if I'm like upset. I always felt like I had to be that child that was like put together and not be bothered and like strong. I'm like so much younger than my parents, but I want to protect them. I don't want them to ever have to worry about me. I've always been that way so I've never let them see things that get me down. I didn't want them to see me as like that weak stupid girl that couldn't like stand up for herself.

Writing to emote during College Writing allowed AnnMarie to let go of some of the control she practiced as part of her family discourse on emotion. She defined writing her emotions as transformative as she struggled, in particular, to heal from her leg injury. She stated:

> I have all these different emotions, and it helps a lot just getting them out. I never experienced so many different emotions in such a short period of my life from the day I got hurt to one month was the biggest roller coaster ride of my life

> emotionally, so to write a paper about it, every emotion came out: anger, sadness, hurt, everything. Writing about it I think is the best way to deal with it. The paper itself might not be that good, but it just helps me to write.

Having been taught to contain her emotions, AnnMarie found the emotional release of writing during the course transformed her. She claimed the course made her more confident and more accepting of herself. I would argue that writing to express her emotions in a classroom environment that respected that expression contributed to the change AnnMarie attributed to the writing she did during the course.

Like AnnMarie, Brittney spoke about her family when she spoke about learning to express emotions. Unlike AnnMarie, Brittney did not experience the women in her family as emotional. She stated:

> My Mom is very, very rational. No like show of emotion. No show of like expressions of, hugs or like that. So I come from a family that's very much reserved and more like science-oriented. That's where I probably get being embarrassed about feelings, from having my Mom as a model.

Brittney connected her family history with gendered sociocultural discourses on emotion. She claimed, "I feel like it's social too like men are just expected not to have emotions or like young boys. It's ingrained from when you are younger. I believe it's like psychological from when you are younger." She also spoke about women writers who express their emotions and the power she has gained from them to resist what she learned from her mother about emotions. She claimed, "There have been like cool women who have written about this and that like gives me power to express emotions." Brittney had a deep sense that emotional expression was healthy and writing could heal through offering the time and space for writers to connect to their emotions. She stated:

> People get sick if they're not expressing their emotions. There's like emotional sickness. It's not just physical. It becomes physical if you like hold it in too long. Writing gives you space and a time to sit with no distraction and no other

> thoughts of society but focus on yourself and how you fit into the world and if you don't do that then I feel like people get sick; they really do. Emotional sickness shows up like physically, and I feel like that's what happens if people don't have that space of writing. That's how it's healing.

Toward the end of her second interview, Brittney connected her process of expressing emotions through writing to the belief that writing could enact social change through connecting people to their emotions. She stated:

> I think that overall society is not very in touch with their emotions and if they can be shown on paper or in any type of writing that makes them feel something than that helps them become in touch with their emotions and then I think the world would be a better place because people would feel more in touch with themselves and take time to think about, really think about, other people too.

She decided at the end of College Writing to add journalism as a second major to her major in Natural Resource Studies. Passionate about environmental justice, she believed writing could offer her a way to educate people about the issues in her field. She also connected the emotional health of people to the health of the environment which she believed writing could enhance. She stated:

> Part of what I want to go to school for is writing and Natural Resource Studies because I'm really passionate about the environment, and I don't think that people are very well informed, even though I can't believe it. I see people throw plastic bottles in garbage cans on campus, and there's a recycling thing right next to it, and it drives me crazy. I don't understand that people aren't well informed about the environment and the crisis that it's going through so that I think that by writing and working for a newspaper or magazine that reaches people that it needs to, not people that are already well informed about those issues, is the way I want to educate. I think they're one and the same, the emotions and the environment, that they're one thing. That's the center.

Brittney learned to control her emotions from her mother. She also learned to resist that control through alternative discourses offered by women writers. Writing to emote during the course gave her the space to practice the kind of writing she believes can change people by healing the space between them and their emotions. She wrote her emotions about the issues that mattered the most to her during the course. Writing to

emote transformed not only her sense of self and her writer identity, but it also clarified her beliefs about the connection between emotions, the environment and writing for change.

Similar to AnnMarie and Brittney, Dan had been taught by his family not to express emotion. He had also been taught to gender emotional expression. He stated:

> My family isn't that emotionally open with each other. We all kind of stick to ourselves. It was usually my Mom that would take care of the emotional stuff. It was always awkward when my Dad tried because it was like he was going into this realm where I had never seen him before.

In his interview, Dan expressed a desire for a different way to be an emotional person:

> I think it would have been better for me being brought up with my Dad being more open with me. I don't want to turn into the father that is quiet about that stuff with their kid. I think I would have been more of an open person with people. Maybe I would have been more friendly with people. I didn't really keep a lot of friends from high school, maybe like two out of the whole class cause I'm a quiet person. I think I would have been much more open if he had brought me up like that.

He also resisted dominant discourses on gender and emotion during his interview by arguing emotional expression as a strength:

> I think holding back emotion shows weakness when you're trying to look strong because you're not comfortable with how other people are going to think about you that you're crying. If I see a guy crying, I'm not going to think that he's like a wimp or anything but like some people might hold it in because they think people might think that about them but that would make them weak.

Dan wrote autobiography for the course about his paternal grandmother's death. At the time of her death, Dan followed his father's lead and controlled his emotions. At the end of the semester, Dan's maternal grandmother died, and Dan realized he was a different person than he had been when his paternal grandmother died. He stated:

> It's weird that my grandmother died back then and I wrote about it and then my other grandmother died right after that. I was at the wake at my first grandmother's death and I was like expressionless like my Dad was and I was just shaking everyone's hand who came through the line and I was trying to keep it in

> but then at this grandmother's death I was like hugging everyone and I was really emotional and I was crying when I went up to the coffin. I feel much better about her death now, the second one, than I did after my first grandmother died.

He attributed this change to writing the autobiography and getting his emotions out:

> While I was writing it my emotions came out. I was lying in bed and I was thinking about her and it was the first time I cried over her death so it definitely stirred something up. Before that, before I wrote, I wasn't that expressive with my feelings. Putting all that on paper helped me get my emotions out. If I hadn't written this essay, I wouldn't have gotten my emotions out really well. And the actual writing of it, getting my emotions on the paper, helped me grow. Deep down inside I knew that it would help me. It was time that I got it out. I don't know if it would have helped me as much if I had just gone to someone and talked about it cause it would have been over and done but actually having to write about it over this period of four weeks. I couldn't like get away from it. I had to deal with it and think. Getting it out on paper was what I needed and having to deal with it for a length of time instead of like turning my back on it and leaving it behind.

He also defined an internal process that involved the release of suppressed emotions and the knowledge that writing to emote caused him to change as a person:

> I think the major thing is that I acknowledged it to myself. I got it out in the open. That's the main point and other people saw that I wrote that and that was also something but not as much. The main thing is that I acknowledged everything to myself and I got it out in the open. I was realizing that I had done something different and someone who knew me before would be surprised because I was changing. I wasn't the same person I was before.

He went on to describe a difference in how he relates to others because of writing to emote:

> I think that it's good that I express my emotions to others now. I'm much more open with people now. I used to just want to stay with one friend at my house or something but now I'm like always going to people's rooms and asking them to come out and do stuff. I like that I can go down the hall to any room and talk to anyone.

Dan expressed his emotions during College Writing when he wrote about the death of his paternal grandmother. Writing to express his emotions about her death challenged the familial and cultural discourses on emotion that position the control of emotion as

"macho" and necessary to performing masculinity in appropriate ways. Writing the autobiography about his grandmother's death allowed Dan to take up an alternative subject position on emotion and to claim emotional expression as a strength. It also allowed him to shift the way he connects to others by giving him greater access to his emotions.

The participants who described writing to emote as transformative defined emotional expression as important to the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities. They wrote during the course to express their emotions and attributed changes in their sense of self to this writing. Each of these participants had been taught to control the expression of their emotions for various reasons. The writing they did in the course allowed them to let go of this control and to express themselves in an environment that supported them and their desire to emote. Through writing their emotions, these participants found themselves able to tell the fullness of their experience including how they felt about it. When they brought their emotions to their research essay, like Brittney did in her essay on vegetarianism and AnnMarie did in her essay on mind/body healing, they claimed their writing was stronger and their writing practice more fulfilling. Expressing their emotions through their writing transformed participants as they wrote to resist the familial and cultural discourses on emotion and to reclaim their emotions as a positive expression of their strength.

The descriptions of writing to emote by participants resist dominant American cultural discourses on emotions where

> tied to tropes of interiority and granted ultimate facticity by being located in the natural body, emotions stubbornly retain their place as the aspect of human experience least subject to control, least constructed or learned (hence most

> universal), least public, and therefore least amenable to sociocultural analysis. (Abu-Lughod & Lutz, 1990, p. 1)

Through their descriptions of writing to emote, participants drew on alternative discourses which positioned participants as both able to express and control their emotions. Participants described emotional expression as a learned practice shaped by familial and cultural discourses on emotion. Their descriptions of writing to emote positioned emotions as open to sociocultural analysis as each participant deconstructed their emotional practice. "Only recently has the *doxa* itself – that emotions are things internal, irrational, and natural – been exposed and questioned" (Abu-Lughod & Lutz, 1990, p. 2). I would argue that participant descriptions of writing to emote define emotions as social, cultural, political and historical as well as located in the psyche and the body. "They show clearly how discourses on emotion and emotional discourses are commentaries on the practices essential to social relations" (Abu-Lughod & Lutz, 1990, pp. 18-19). Writing to emote transformed participants because it allowed them to feel their emotions, to more fully embody their experience and to construct a discursive emotional practice that enriched their sense of self, connected them to others and to the social world. "Given its definition as nature, at least in the West, emotion discourses may be one of the most likely and powerful devices by which domination proceeds" (Lutz, 1990, p. 78). Writing to emote may offer writers a literacy practice to resist such domination, to challenge the "rhetoric of control" and to define and feel their emotions through their written words.

Broke Silence against Shame

Three participants wrote autobiography during College Writing to break a silence. While they wrote to make sense of their experience and emotions and to get their stories

out and share them, they each identified breaking silence about their experience as one of the most important reasons why writing transformed them. Kirsten, Patty and Tina wrote about experiences they had not shared with others except for a few close friends and family members. Each of them wrote about experiences of violence perpetrated in private domains by people they knew. They had silenced these experiences due to feelings of shame, the desire to protect those closest to them who did not know of the violence and fear of exposing those closest to them who had hurt them. The dominant discourses on private experiences of violence most often blame the victims and produce a culture of shame and silence (Herman, 1997). This silencing suppressed the experiences and emotions of Kirsten, Patty and Tina. Each of them wrote about their experiences of violence and expressed their emotions about these experiences during College Writing. They identified this writing as transformative because it ended their silence as they wrote their stories for the first time. Ending the silence changed their sense of self as they came to understand their experience in new ways and to feel "less tormented" and "more sane." While these participants broke their silence through writing their stories, they also overcame feelings of shame by bringing their stories into the classroom. Bringing their private experiences of violence into the public domain of the classroom allowed them to challenge their beliefs that others would blame them and judge them as victims. The other students in the classroom supported them and witnessed their stories of violence with empathy and compassion.

Through writing their stories and sharing them with other students, Kirsten, Patty and Tina transformed their experiences of violence from silence and shame to connection, emotional expression and articulation. Sharing their stories with others

helped them to feel connected to their readers and to feel more known by them as they revealed parts of their experience they had kept secret. Writing their stories also helped them to feel more connected to themselves. As they wrote about experiences that had played an important role in shaping their sense of self, they no longer felt like they had to hide parts of their histories or keep pieces of themselves hidden. I would argue that each of these participants wrote to resist the cultural and institutional discourses that surround people who experience violence in private domains with shame, specifically the discourses that blame the victims of violence and position them as deviant and inferior. The stories written by participants represent them as women who have survived violence and been changed by it. They did not write away the consequences of the violence they experienced, but wrote autobiographies that capture the complexity that surrounds surviving violence: blame and forgiveness, responsibility and helplessness, fear and resistance, difference but not inferiority. Writing their stories asserts that the violence they survived did not silence them. It asserts their right to put language to their experience even as those who hurt them would deny their words.

Patty wrote her fourth essay about being raped by her ex-boyfriend while she was in a relationship with him. According to her, she initially wrote this essay to teach me a lesson. She and I had struggled the entire semester over my requirement to include the personal in all of her essays. Patty claimed she wrote about being raped to show me why I should not require students to write the personal. She stated:

> My original reason for writing this essay was because in the other three essays you wanted us to put ourselves into the essay. I don't like people asking about my personal life and asking me to put myself into things. You wanted us to put ourselves in the essays which was interesting in my opinion. I didn't really like it. Writing this essay started off as a reason to say this is why you shouldn't try to dig into our lives. I wrote this to spite you.

But as Patty wrote, she recognized that the writing started to change her. She claimed:

> Then it turned into something else. It backfired. Showing you how scarring that relationship was, why I wouldn't like stuff about it, I thought that would be a good reason not to ask about people's lives, but on my second draft I was like, "I'm really glad I wrote about this." Draft one I wrote from a very bitter state of mind, "sure get into our lives." By the second draft I realized exactly how personal it was cause the first draft I wrote I just kind of typed up and was like, "I'll show her." The second one, when I finally read it, I realized how personal it was and how I had never opened up that much about it. And somewhere between the third and fifth draft, cause there were many drafts on this one, I realized how different it was. Writing the essay changed how I view being raped. I don't think it changes how I feel about it just how I view it. I'm able to understand it more now, but I still have the same bitter feelings toward it.

When she wrote about being raped, Patty ended her silence and told her secret which transformed her sense of self. In her interview, she spoke about her struggle with sharing her story in the class: her fear of trusting others, her belief that it may be wrong to share the personal in the classroom and her fear of being blamed for being raped. She also spoke about the healing that took place in the course because she wrote about being raped and ended her silence about that experience:

> Sharing it was scary as all hell. I'm so glad you didn't make me read it in class. My relationship with him caused a lot of problems cause I couldn't trust. After writing the essay, I'm able to trust guys in general more. I think I realized it's not an all guys thing; it was him. Since writing that essay I've been told I'm more comfortable around guys in general and more comfortable around other people. It's not like a huge secret anymore cause I shared it with an outside audience. No one blamed me which I was so happy about. For a long time, I honestly thought it was my fault. I think it was wrong in a way letting my personal life be not so personal, but it wasn't wrong because it fixed so many problems I was having in my life. I'm actually a lot more mentally sane now then when it was all a big secret. I faced a lot of my fears after writing that essay. To me this was a sickness.

Patty resisted writing the personal throughout her semester of College Writing. When she came to her fourth essay, she decided to write a silenced secret about an experience of sexual violence. While she claimed she decided to write this essay to show me why I should change my requirement for students to write the personal, the writing taught her

why writing the personal may be transformative. Writing her story and sharing it with others broke her silence and gave her a way to resist her shame at being raped. It helped her to trust people more and to face her fears. It helped her to heal.

Kirsten, Patty and Tina took up the College Writing curriculum to write about their experiences of violence and to break their silence and resist the shame that surrounded it. They wrote autobiography about these experiences because they felt a need to do so. College Writing provided them with a space to fill that need. They each also came to define the classroom as a space in which they could feel safe enough to write their stories. Tina began the semester writing her autobiography about the emotional violence in her home, but Patty and Kirsten needed almost the entire semester to build the trust required for them to write their autobiographies. I imagine Patty and Kirsten carried more shame than Tina about sharing their stories because their stories involved much more physical and, in Patty's case sexual, violence than Tina's. Within the dominant discourses on violence, being the victim of physical and/or sexual violence implies a greater degree of damage than emotional violence. It also implies a more severe wound since the boundaries of the physical body have been violated.

Tina shared her story through the writing workshop process the class had established as a traditional literacy practice; she read her essay aloud and received feedback from the other students in her group. Both Kirsten and Patty circumvented the writing workshop process because they did not want to read their essays aloud and receive feedback in the public forum of the classroom. Kirsten and Patty wanted to share their stories with others, but they were not ready to speak those stories in the classroom. They trusted most of the other students in the class enough to write their stories, and they

trusted me enough to believe they could take control of the ways in which they would share them. This sense of safety and trust played a crucial part in their ability to break their silence and resist their shame in their College Writing course. Writing the details of their experience allowed them to see themselves in new ways and to lessen the hold the past had on their future. Sharing these details with others in the classroom released Kirsten, Patty and Tina from some of the silence and shame that surrounded them. The experiences of Kirsten, Patty and Tina in College Writing suggest that writing may transform by providing a space to break silences and tell stories against feelings of shame. Their descriptions of writing about their experiences of violence also suggest that writing about violence may potentially mitigate some of its consequences for those who survive it by offering a space to put words to experiences that may seem ineffable.

Students who write personal narrative about violence represent the greatest challenge to the discourses used to prohibit such narrative from the classroom. These discourses claim writing personal narrative "encourages a student to discover a unified, coherent, ahistorical and acultural self, a writing task that asks the student to turn herself into an object of analysis" (Payne, 2000b, p. 9). However, the self on the page who has experienced violence is "quite a postmodern self, aware that meanings shift depending on who is in control, aware that dominant beliefs that had grounded [the] world before no longer apply, aware that [the] self has been shattered into pieces" (Payne, 2000b, p. 10). Students who have experienced violence in their lives have also survived "discursive trauma that renders them already postmodern subjects, always already decentered, their identities constructed from the violence and unspeakableness of the trauma" (Payne, 2000b, p. 31). The struggle over inviting personal narrative into the classroom is most

often a struggle over meaning making and the fear of certain kinds of stories; the student texts are a struggle over who defines the "truth" of history, culture and society. Certain kinds of stories can challenge cultural truths and dominant discourses that institutions have an investment in maintaining such as the myths of the traditional, nuclear family, equal opportunity and freedom.

The debate over personal narrative in the classroom suggests that essays about violence and oppression are about relations of power and knowledge. What does it mean to bring those kinds of stories into the context of the classroom? "What sources of power are challenged or reinforced, and why?" (Payne, 2000a, p. 152). Violence is a form of oppression, and essays about such oppression are crucial to the projects of critiquing power and ideology. The ways in which teachers respond to student essays and the discourses teachers take up define the deployment of power in their classrooms and determine the discoursal construction of available subject positions (Payne, 2000a). Many feminist discourses claim writing stories about experiences of violence as a way to resist the dominant discourses that position those who have experienced violence: as a way to offer alternative subject positions that assert the right of survivors to articulate their story.

Kirsten, Patty and Tina wrote about violence that occurred between them and people with whom they were in relationship. While American culture moves toward accepting these stories as part of a cultural narrative, these stories continue to be silenced in multiple contexts, the classroom in particular. Dominant cultural and institutional discourses most often silence and shame experiences of violence between people in relationship by constructing these experiences as private, personal and individualized.

These discourses most often blame the victim as choosing to be in a situation where she got hurt. Aware of these cultural and institutional discourses, Kirsten, Patty and Tina struggled with bringing their stories into the College Writing classroom. Each of them knew that they were crossing the familial, cultural and institutional borders between the public and the private. While previous teachers had enforced these borders, Kirsten, Patty and Tina knew that I welcomed their stories, but they were afraid of the responses they might get from their peers. While Kirsten, Patty and Tina greatly desired to share their stories, they also feared putting their stories out into the world. They feared bringing experiences that felt so shameful and personal into the public space of the classroom; they feared crossing the private/public border in such a flagrant way. They had a sense of wanting to protect themselves as well as the people in their stories who had hurt them.

For these three participants, the desire to tell their stories was stronger than their fear. Each of them found a way to write their stories and share them that honored their need for safety. They chose what writing to bring into the classroom and what writing to keep in their journal. They chose what writing to share in the writing workshops and to share with me. Being able to write these private stories allowed them to release the secrets they held and to break the silence that surrounded them. This release into language was transformative and liberatory. As a feminist poststructuralist teacher, I offered them a discourse of resistance to their shame and silence by explicitly welcoming *all* stories into the classroom through the texts we read and the comments I made during class and in conferences. The desire of these participants to write their stories connected to my desire to have their stories written.

Became a Better Writer

All of the participants in the study claimed they became better writers because of the writing they did during College Writing; however, Preety, Shane and Zackary defined becoming a better writer as *the* reason the writing they did in the course transformed them. These three participants wrote to explore their ideas and to position themselves within an academic context as competent writers. They described being able to write well as important to their sense of self. The writing they did during the course caused them to feel as if they could write better than before which shifted their sense of self and transformed their writer identities. Preety described the process of becoming a better writer as a "healing process: a process of letting go of things and coming to more important and deeper issues." She stated:

> At the beginning, writing a paper and the whole process can be really, really painful but then after you're finished writing a paper, if you go back, you're like, "wow, I wrote this thing." It's good and I like it and you feel so good about yourself.

For Preety, writing well helped her to feel positive about her sense of self and more competent as a student and as writer. During her interviews, she described experiencing the classroom before College Writing as a place of fear and intimidation. Becoming a better writer allowed her to feel more confident in the classroom and more able to articulate her ideas.

Shane also described feeling better about himself as he became a better writer. He began the course defining himself as a very poor writer: as a person incapable of writing well. The writing process of College Writing taught him that he could write, and he finished the course feeling like he could write well. He defined bringing the personal into his academic writing as important to the shift in his writer identity. He also found

with each essay he wrote that he needed less assistance from others to get his ideas into written words that read well to him. He stated:

> Bringing myself into my writing impacted me. It opened up to so many other parts. It's not just like bringing myself in; it's learning how to do it, doing it well. Writing papers on my own instead of seeking help the second I get them, that definitely helped. I know how to write now.

Shane described an increased sense of writer confidence and a change in the way he writes when he defined what writing in the course transformed for him. Becoming a better writer during College Writing helped him to see himself as a person who could meet the expectations of a university classroom which changed his writer identity. Bringing the personal into his writing changed the way he had been taught to write and allowed him to write in ways he defined as more meaningful as he fourth essay demonstrates.

Becoming a better writer transformed Preety, Shane and Zackary because they wanted to learn to write well, and they closely associated their writer identities with their sense of self. They did not write in the course to make sense of their experience or emotions or to end silence or emote. They wrote to investigate and articulate their ideas in writing: a process which shifted their sense of self and writer identities as they became more adept at using written language to communicate and express their thoughts and opinions about topics which mattered to them. They wrote about what they identified as important political and social issues: population control, gender discrimination and the War on Terrorism. I would also argue that they wrote to explore what they could do with language by pushing the limits of what they had done before as writers. Each of them took risks with their writing and discovered themselves far more capable as writers than they had imagined before the course.

Why Does Writing Transform?

The discourses in the literature posit many different reasons why writing transforms writers. Each discourse seems to position writing as a practice that holds the potential to enact whichever transformation the discourse proposes. Emotivist discourse claims that writing changes writers because it provides the space for them to connect to their emotions which allows them to discover a greater sense of self and integrate emotions into their experience. By closing the divide between their sense of self and emotions, writers can heal their bodies and psyches. Emotivists also argue that writing can transform writers by offering them a way to emote: to feel their emotions. In many ways, emotivist discourse is a critique of mainstream American culture and its denial of emotions. Emotivist discourse defines emoting and connecting to emotions as healthy for individuals as well as cultures and writing as a way to this healing practice. Narrativist discourse also positions writing as a practice that provides the space for writers to transform: as a way to story which offers writers the possibility to give coherence to their lives, connect the past to the present, break silence and connect to others. Narrativist discourse defines each of these practices as a reason why writing may transform writers. Narrativist discourse argues that constructing stories and putting experience into language offers writers a sense of control which may be transformative. They also argue that writing can offer the potential for writers to construct new narratives which may offer the potential for individual as well as social transformation.

Social constructivist discourse defines writing as part of critical literacy practice. According to social constructivists, writing can offer writers a way to empower themselves and to challenge oppression by giving them a practice to question and

examine their social context and develop critical consciousness. Feminist social constructivists argue that the practice of writing can bring the private, especially the experience of the body, into the public domain which can be transformative for those whose oppression is marked on their bodies and enacted in private. Poststructuralist discourse positions writing as a practice that can bring awareness to writers: awareness of discursive situations and structures as well as awareness of how language shapes and is shaped by identities, institutions and the social world. For poststructuralists, writing transforms because it offers writers a practice to disrupt dominant discourses and a practice to manufacture new possibilities. Poststructuralists argue that writing may transform through deconstructing master-narratives, complicating the binaries that maintain dominance and making agency possible for writers. Feminist poststructuralists also assert that writing can offer a practice for writers to critically reflect on their emotions which feminist poststructuralists believe necessary for social transformation. Poststructuralists argue that writing may surface the unconscious and bring desire into language which can transform many writers as they seek to construct alternative discourses to those they have taken up in their lives.

Participants in this study drew on multiple discourses to describe and define why writing transformed them during their College Writing course. Participants aligned themselves with the discourses in the literature by defining writing as a practice which enacted transformation. Those participants who described writing as transformative because it helped them make sense of their experience and emotions drew on emotivist and narrativist discourses; writing about their experience allowed participants to connect their past to their present and to give a sense of coherence to their life story. It also gave

them more of a sense of control over the events in their pasts. According to these participants, writing offered them a way to write out their experience, look at it and reflect on it. These participants identified writing to make sense of their experience and emotions as therapeutic: as a practice to get through difficult experiences in their lives. They also claimed writing to make sense of their experience and emotions allowed them to envision their future in more positive ways and to accept their pasts as a part of who they understand themselves to be in the present.

The participants who described writing as transformative because it gave them a practice to get it out there and share it with others drew on emotivist discourse. They described crossing the border between the inside and the outside as the process of getting it out there. They each seemed to have a sense that writing transformed them because it allowed them to release what they defined as inside of them into the outside world. Once it had been released, participants then felt like they could let it go. For most participants, this meant letting go of their past and the emotions they had held onto about it. They described a change in their psyche and in their body due to this release: a lifting of a big weight, an unclogging of cells. Participants also described sharing their writing with others as an integral part of the healing process. The descriptions participants gave of sharing their writing with others aligned them more closely with a narrativist discourse. Participants described sharing their writing with other students in the class as connecting them to their readers, as helping them to feel less alone and as allowing them to trust others more. This sense of connection that participants described as part of getting it out there helped them to feel more known by others and less afraid of sharing their ideas, experiences and emotions.

Each of the discourses in the literature suggests that sharing writing may be part of the transformative practice of writing workshops. I would argue that the participants in this study assert that sharing writing and the relationships built through that practice constitute one of the most important reasons why writing in the classroom transforms. Most of the participants identified being read and having their words witnessed by the other students in the class as crucial to writing that transformed them. This applies especially to the participants who wrote to break silence against shame. They needed the other students in the classroom to help them end their silence and to resist the shame they felt about their experience. Part of how they described the transformation enacted through the writing they did in the course had to do with a shift in their ability to relate to others: to feel comfortable and to trust. Sharing the stories of their pasts with other students who responded with compassion helped the participants who wrote to break a silence to feel healthier. They identified a change in their psyche as well as their bodies due to writing and sharing their writing: a sense of no longer having an illness caused by the secret they had silenced before they wrote in the course.

The participants who wrote to emote drew on emotivist discourse to describe the process of writing to express their emotions. They claimed that writing transformed them because it offered them a practice to emote which they defined as one of the "best ways" to deal with their experience at the time. Participant descriptions of writing to emote centered on their history with emotions and its connection to the writing they did in the course. The writing practice of the course gave them the time and space they needed to connect to their emotions and to heal from their experience. They described themselves as growing because of this practice, and they identified a change in their psyche as well

as their bodies. They knew they were different from when they started the course due to writing to emote. Writing to emote in the course also gave them a practice to resist the "rhetoric of control" (Lutz, 1990) which dominates American cultural constructs of emotion. The participants who wrote to emote also wrote to resist the gender roles ascribed to emotional expression in American culture.

The participants in this study who wrote to emote suggest that connecting to and expressing emotions may be necessary to living a healthier and more integrated life. They each described feeling better about their sense of self as well as their relationships with others because they wrote to emote. Six of the eight participants who described writing to emote as transformative also described getting it out there and sharing it as transformative. These six participants found the process of getting their stories out and sharing them integral to the transformative practice of writing to emote. The two participants who defined writing to emote as transformative but did not describe getting it out there and sharing it as transformative, Dan and Michael, claimed they needed the space to write their emotions for themselves and sharing their stories had little to do with the transformative practice of writing to emote.

Emotivist discourse positions emotional expression as a way to "heal your pain" and proposes the "healing power of expressing emotions" (Pennebaker, 1997, 2004). The participants in this study offer an explanation as to why writing to emote may heal. Each of them had been taught to deny their emotions through familial and cultural discourses. They wrote to emote in the course because they desired a way to feel their denied emotions. The writing practice of the course afforded them the opportunity to put written language to their emotions which caused them to also express those emotions; when they

wrote about their emotions, they also felt them. According to participants, writing to emote released their emotions and that release caused participants to feel physically and psychologically better about themselves and their experiences. It also allowed them to take up alternative discourses to the discourses which had constructed their emotions. The experience of writing to emote in the course liberated them from the emotional ideologies they had employed to control their emotions previous to College Writing. I would argue that this represents a shift in power and the possibility that emotions do not subvert knowledge but actually enable learning (Jaggar, 1989). Participant descriptions of the transformation enacted through writing to emote suggest that participants felt more empowered to define and to feel their emotions because of what they learned through writing to emote. This shift aligns them with social constructivist and poststructuralist discourses, especially the feminist, as it asserts that writing to emote may develop critical consciousness as well as an awareness of the power of language to shape such practices as emotions.

The participants who described becoming a better writer as the reason why writing transformed them during the course demonstrate the social constructivist and poststructuralist claim that the practice of writing in many ways embodies the practice of identity. For these participants, writing during the course transformed them because they connected their writing practice deeply to their sense of self. According to them, the words they wrote represented them within an academic context, and they understood that representation to reflect their intelligence and capability as writers and as students. College Writing offered them an opportunity to learn how to write better which, to them, meant an opportunity to show themselves as more intelligent and able. These participants

seem to suggest that writing transforms because it can offer some writers a practice to construct their identities within an academic context in ways that resist the often elitist discourses that shape the practice of academic writing. Each of these participants claimed themselves more confident as writers and as students after College Writing. They also claimed they felt more able to express themselves and their ideas within an academic setting. I would argue that this suggests that the writing they defined as transformative in the course, writing that brings the personal to the academic and allows for an exploration of ideas and writing possibilities, may offer a practice that could bring more student voices into any classroom, thereby, creating a more diverse and dynamic learning environment for all students and teachers: a more transformative classroom practice.

CHAPTER 7

WRITING AND TRANSFORMATION

Introduction

This study began with the desire to better understand the connection between writing and transformation in college composition. I wanted to learn more about how students used writing to enact change in their lives while taking their first year writing course. I wanted to learn more about how they understood the ability of writing to transform. I also wanted to understand more about why students might decide to take up the College Writing curriculum to do more than simply fulfill their first year writing requirement for the university. The participants in this study have taught me much of what I wanted to learn about writing and transformation in college composition. When I began this study I imagined that participants would describe a somewhat linear process of writing for transformation, would proclaim the one thing about writing during the course that changed them or would describe a specific aspect of themselves that had changed because of their writing. I was mistaken, and much of the work of this dissertation has been about me learning to blur theoretical and practical boundaries and to see myself and the participants in this study in all of our complexity.

Each participant drew on multiple discourses to tell a unique story about what writing transformed for them and how and why writing transformed them during the course. Most of them also drew on common discourses at some moment in the construction of their understanding of writing for transformation in college composition. The process of writing for transformation differed for each participant. Each of them took up various aspects of the course to write in transformative ways: no two exactly the

same. Participants described the process of writing for transformation as anything but linear, and some of that process remains still unspoken as some participants could not find the words to describe parts of their experience in the course. Participants named many different reasons as to how and why writing transformed them by drawing connections from their histories in and out of the classroom to their experiences in their College Writing course. No one thing transformed any one participant. Participants also claimed to have changed in all sorts of ways; some of those changes they understood, and some they did not. I did my best to capture their understanding of what transformed due to the writing they did in the course. I also recognize that time remains a factor in the connection between writing and transformation. The changes participants attributed to the writing they did during the course will evolve. I imagine some of the changes will dissipate; some may be greater than participants described at the time of their interviews, and the writing may have enacted changes that participants remained unaware of at the time of the study.

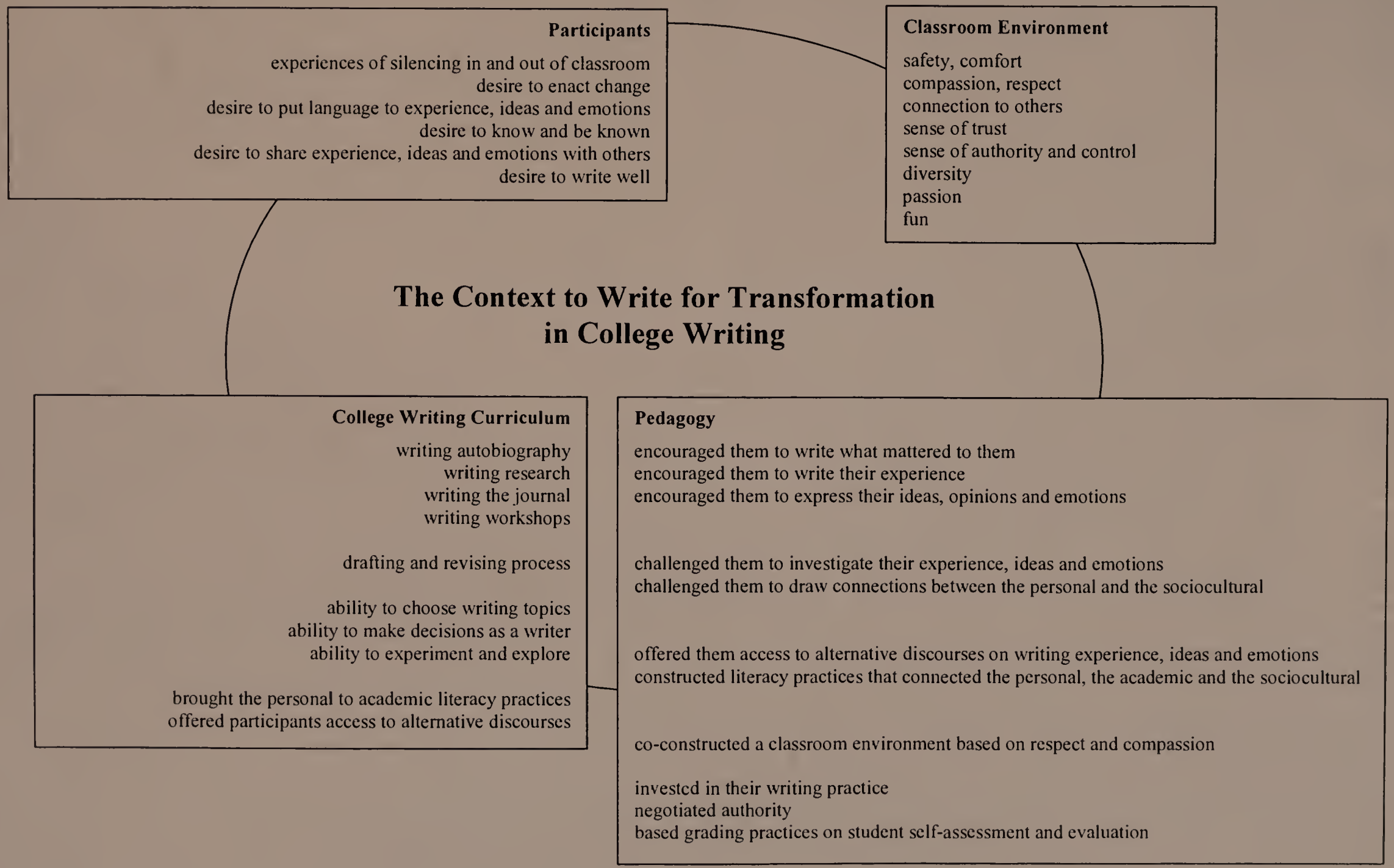
The participants in this study make it very clear that the connection between writing and transformation differs for individuals and cannot be replicated in any concrete manner. As I analyzed their interviews, I realized that part of me sought a model for teaching college composition that would enact personal and social transformation for all students. While I no longer imagine such a model could exist, I do believe that the participants in this study offered some very valuable insight into how teachers might create a college composition curriculum that offers more students the possibility of writing for transformation. I know that the debate continues in the field of college composition as to what the purpose of the course might actually be to best serve

students. More and more the argument seems to be shifting toward a belief that college composition needs to challenge students to question their identities and to critically examine texts as well as the social world. As I argued in the literature review, I believe writing teachers can serve students best when they open their classrooms to writers and *their* personal and intellectual projects. This means opening the classroom to the purposes students may want to put writing which may not align with the current theory on college composition. The participants in this study support this argument through their descriptions and definitions of transformative writing. They wrote for transformation in college composition for many reasons. That writing changed them in ways that they believe supported their growth in positive ways and allowed them to more fully enter their lives. Taking the course helped them to write better and to enter the academy with more confidence and competence. It gave them access to alternative discourses and a practice to shift their subject positions.

The Context to Write for Transformation in College Writing

While participants offered diverse reasons for why they wrote for transformation in the course, this study seems to indicate that consistent factors created the context for writing and transformation: the silencing and desire of participants, the College Writing curriculum, the classroom environment and the way I taught the course (see Figure 1). The participants in this study brought diverse backgrounds with them into the College Writing classroom. Each of them had their own stories to tell about their experiences in and out of the classroom. These experiences shaped their writing in the course. Among their diversity, participants shared one thing in common. They had all experienced some kind of silencing. This silencing shaped much of their desire as students in the College

Figure 1: The Context to Write for Transformation in College Writing



Writing classroom and contributed a part of the context for the transformative writing they did in college composition. All of them described experiences of silencing in the classroom. They described the institutional suppression of their personal experience in academic settings, in particular the prohibition of writing that experience. When participants began College Writing, they came into the course having taken up institutional discourses on writing that created an intellectual and emotional divide between the personal and the academic and silenced the articulation of their experience and knowledge. All of them had also been taught to separate the private and the public by silencing the private in public spaces. They had been taught that certain experiences and emotions should not be shared with others. Some of them had been taught to silence parts of their pasts. Others had been taught to silence their emotions, and some had been taught to silence their ideas and opinions.

The participants in this study took up the College Writing curriculum to end the silencing they had experienced. They wrote to bridge the personal and the academic and the private and the public. They wrote to put words to their experiences and ideas and to express the parts of their lives that had been silenced by familial, social and institutional discourses. Their experiences of being silenced opened them to the possibility of writing for transformation because it created a desire to put their experience, ideas and emotions into written language and to share their words with others, to know and be known. They each also came with a desire, conscious or not, to enact change in some way: in their ability to write, in their academic lives and/or in their personal lives. They brought this desire into the College Writing classroom and met with a curriculum which offered them

the literacy practices to fulfill their need to write what mattered to them: to write for transformation.

Participants described multiple aspects of the College Writing curriculum which created the context for writing and transformation. Most of them described common literacy practices and the drafting and revising process as transformative. They also described their ability to choose writing topics, to make decisions as writers and to experiment and explore with their writing as integral to writing that changed them. Each of the literacy practices participants described as transformative involved crossing the border between the personal and the academic. Through these literacy practices participants felt like they took up the Subject position within their written discourse and wrote with authority which ended the silencing they had each experienced in some way in their past and allowed them to begin to enact the change they desired in their lives in and out of the classroom.

Participants also defined the classroom environment as crucial to writing for transformation in the course. Most participants described the classroom environment as a space where they felt safe and comfortable with articulating the personal and expressing their emotions and ideas. As part of the classroom environment participants described the relationships they built with other students as offering them compassion, respect and a sense of connection and trust necessary for participants to write for transformation. Participants also described a sense of authority in the classroom that felt new to them and allowed them to feel more in control of their writing process and to take more risks with their writing. Some participants attributed their ability to write for transformation in the course to the diversity of the other students in the classroom and the belief that they

would be accepted by them. Lastly, participants described the classroom environment as fun; they felt like they could relax and enjoy their writing process which encouraged them to write with passion and to take risks because they felt less afraid and intimidated by writing in the classroom.

Participants described the way I taught the course as also contributing to creating a context for writing and transformation. They each felt like I encouraged them to write what mattered to them, to write their experience and to express their emotions, opinions and ideas. They described my pedagogy as challenging them to think harder and connect to the contexts that surrounded them. According to participants, the way I taught the course helped construct a classroom environment based on respect and compassion and built upon the relationships among students and between students and me. I pushed participants to bring the personal to their academic literacy practices, and I offered them access to alternative discourses on academic writing and on writing their experience, emotions and ideas. I invested in their writing practice by commenting on their writing in ways that engaged with the content of their essays and helped them to feel heard. I also negotiated authority in the classroom as much as I felt possible. I implemented a grading policy which assigned most of the assessment of their writing to them. I also held participants responsible for the writing workshop process which accounted for much of the time we spent in the classroom.

Implications for Teaching Writing for Transformation

I began this dissertation research questioning whether writing in classrooms could offer students the possibility to change their lives. Could academic institutions and teachers create curricula and classroom contexts that encouraged and supported personal

and social change? After interviewing the participants for this study and analyzing their spoken and written words, I no longer question the transformative possibilities of writing in the classroom; I know writing in the classroom can change students, those around them and the social contexts in which they live. I also know institutions and teachers can play a very important role in writing for transformation. In many ways the implications of this research for teaching writing have to do with institutions and teachers exploring their beliefs about teaching writing. What is the purpose of teaching writing at a university? What is the purpose of teaching college composition? If the answers to these questions involve supporting students as they seek to make sense of their experience, as they seek to express their emotions and ideas and to articulate what matters to them, if the answers involve holding a space for students to break silences and to find the words they desire or to assist students in becoming more vocal and confident, if institutions and teachers want to offer students access to alternative discourses in the hope of new ways of thinking and being, if the purpose of teaching writing is to help students become better writers, then institutions and teachers must open the classroom to writing for transformation.

According to the participants in this study, teaching writing that transforms requires starting with the personal: starting with students and their stories, pasts and desires. It means creating a writing curriculum that offers students literacy practices that cross the borders between the personal and the academic and the private and the public. Teaching transformative writing requires challenging students to investigate the self and the construction of that self through sociocultural discourses. It also requires offering students alternative discourses to the dominant discourses on emotions, experience and, especially, on academic writing. The participants in this study suggest that a

transformative writing curriculum must offer students a sustained writing practice so that students stay with their ideas and emotions long enough to deeply investigate and understand their thinking and feeling about the topics they decide to write on. To write for transformation, participants suggest that students need a classroom environment that honors their words and their histories. They also need an environment that encourages them to build relationships with each other and teaches them how to respond to each other with respect and compassion and to embrace difference as a place of knowledge. Participants in this study also assert that students need to hold as much authority as possible to feel free enough to write in ways that change them. They need to be able to determine their writing topics and to experiment with their writing process to fully learn about their potential as writers and to explore the possibility that writing may transform them. They also need to control their writing process so that they decide what to write and what to share with others.

To teach writing that transforms, teachers must hold the space of the classroom for students to practice writing in ways that matter to them. Mostly this involves designing curriculum and classroom practices that encourage students to make decisions about their writing and to bring their histories, beliefs, ideas and emotions into the classroom. Teachers can design writing workshops as a literacy practice premised on relationship and student responsibility to each other as readers and as writers. Teachers can create grading practices that emphasize student self-assessment and evaluation and move away from the teacher as the only one who determines the criteria for good writing even within institutions that enforce grading policies. Teachers can work toward creating a classroom environment that relies less on a sense of competition and more on a desire

to share and learn. I know that many teachers fear opening the writing classroom to students and their desires and words. They fear the kinds of stories students may bring into the room. They fear not being able to protect students who have made themselves vulnerable in their writing from being hurt by the words of other students. In many ways, teachers fear losing control of the classroom to the unpredictable and unruly emotions that students may bring with them. As the participants in this study assert, students are very adept at protecting themselves and negotiating the relationships they build in the classroom. They also know too well how to control their emotions and how to perform in academic contexts. To open the classroom to writing for transformation, as teachers, we need to put down our fears and trust students more to decide what writing they will do. If we want to enable personal and political transformation, if we want students to write in ways that matter, we cannot silence any of the words they may want to write. We can only be ready to meet them with compassion and respect and a desire to understand them. We can also be ready to challenge students and the discourses they may take up to articulate their desires, experiences and ideas. By drawing on multiple discourses and resisting dominant discourses which silence, teachers can create the writing classroom as a space for students to write in ways that allow them to put into language the change they desire in the world.

Transformation of the Teacher

Conducting this research has changed how I understand the teaching of writing. As I analyzed the data and wrote each piece of the dissertation, I found myself trusting students more and trusting the writing process more. Even as I come from a process pedagogy tradition, I found myself as a teacher investing a lot of time and energy in

trying to control and manage the classroom and students and their writing process. This research has helped me to learn how to let go and allow students to take responsibility for much of what happens in the classroom. It has also taught me that many students will invest in their writing if given the opportunity to choose their writing topics and to make decisions about their writing that allow them to experiment and explore. Once a student invests in their writing, they will work at improving it and most of my role as the teacher becomes that of an editor. This research taught me that students write best when they *want* to write, and I can serve them best as a teacher by committing myself to creating a context where this will be true.

In addition to learning to let go, I have also learned that what I do and say as a teacher matters. Before this research, some part of me doubted that most students listened to what I had to say or trusted in my ability to teach them about writing. The participants in this study taught me that students are listening and that my authority as a teacher is given to me in many ways by the institution which I represent, and I best use it wisely. This research has taught me that I can use my position as a teacher to help make the classroom a place students want to be: a place that feels safe where they can enjoy themselves and write with pleasure. I can teach to challenge students to learn and think and strive to articulate their deepest thoughts and desires. I can teach to resist silencing and fear. This research inspired me to invest myself more in the teaching I do. I teach now more from a place of knowing that the students writing in my classrooms may write to enact change, and I can help them do so.

Implications for Research on Writing and Transformation

While the research for this dissertation has answered many of my questions about writing and transformation in college composition, some of my questions about the transformative possibilities of writing remain unanswered. This research has also brought me to new questions and desires as a teacher and as a researcher. As a researcher, I was struck by the power of dominant discourses on academic writing and their coercive force in shaping the writing practices and writer identities of the participants in this study. More research needs to be conducted on the institutional practice of teaching writing and its role in delimiting what experiences, emotions and ideas can be put into words and put into the world. This study has also forced me to question the importance of relationships in the writing classroom. I had always taken them for granted, but I now believe they play a crucial role in the success of a writing course. Further research needs to be conducted on relationships in the writing classroom. This study also offers possibilities for continuing to research the transformative writing practices of students in other classrooms with other teachers. How important is the context for writing for transformation? How important is the role of the teacher? Finally, this study taught me the importance of emotions to learning. I would like to conduct further research on the role of emotions in the writing classroom.

The teaching that I did at the rural school in New Hampshire left me questioning whether writing in classrooms could offer students the possibility to change their lives, especially when those lives are steeped in generations of poverty, violence and oppression. While the research for this dissertation has strengthened my beliefs in the ability of writing in classrooms to change students, it has not directly addressed the

question teaching in New Hampshire drove me to ask. I know a little more about how and why writing in the classroom may mitigate the consequences of violence because of the participants in this study who wrote and spoke about their experiences of violence and the impact writing about these experiences had on them. These participants encourage me to believe that writing may offer a practice of resistance for those who have lived experiences of violence, but I also believe that more research needs to be conducted on writing as a practice to support those who have survived violence. Like previous research on writing to heal from violence, the research for this dissertation suggests writing may have great potential for helping survivors to understand their experience and to live healthier lives. It also suggests that one of the most important roles teachers may play in the writing classroom is to witness the stories students may have to tell about experiences of violence. More research needs to be conducted on the power of writing to heal. As the War on Terrorism continues across the world and the statistics on violence steadily rise, I believe we need practices like writing to heal more than ever. Writing may not be able to end the violence, but it can change the lives of those who live with its consequences so that they may more fully be in the world as Subjects.

Writing and Transformation

This study suggests that traditional academic discourse on writing silences students more than teaches them how to write well or to succeed as writers within academic institutions. Many studies before this one have argued the same findings on traditional academic discourse. The question arises as to why so many students continue to be subjected to a discourse on writing which does not serve them well. How do institutions and teachers change the way they teach writing from the beginning of

schooled language so that students never equate writing in the classroom with silence and coercion and the need to please others to succeed? Opening the classroom to writing for transformation may offer one answer to this question. By creating a context in the classroom for students to write what matters to them and to be read in ways that affirm their sense of self, writing may become a practice students define as having the power to enact change, as a practice that can help them articulate the experience, emotions and ideas most valuable to them.

Traditional academic discourse interpellates subjects through its ideological stance that mastering the conventions of academic writing will ensure an individual academic, economic and social success. This myth must continue to be challenged. All those who play a role in shaping the writing classroom need to take up alternative discourses. Feminist poststructuralist discourse may offer the best challenge to traditional academic discourse because it embodies multiple discourses. It allows for writers to inhabit multiple subject positions and to act from multiple desires; it leaves room for conflict and contradiction. It also embraces subjective experience and emotions as well as argues for a critical stance on identity, texts and the social world. As I stated earlier, no one literacy practice or one discourse can create the context for writing for transformation in a classroom. Because of its discoursal complexity, feminist poststructuralism may be the beginning of an alternative discourse on writing that can create a context for more students to write for transformation and to resist the silencing of traditional academic discourse as well as the silencing of dominant discourses in American culture. Many find feminist poststructuralist discourse inaccessible because of its language. As a teacher, I draw on the theory to shape my practice, but I rarely use its

terms with students. If feminist poststructuralist discourse is to present a challenge to traditional academic discourse on writing and its liberal humanist center, it must evolve a language that more teachers and students can use in the writing classroom to talk about their practice. As this study found, writing can transform students and teachers in ways that matter. The writing classroom can be a space that changes those within it and the world in which they live. Institutions and teachers owe it to students to teach writing in ways that teach articulation and pleasure instead of silence and fear. Students would welcome this change, and this change would transform all of us.

Interchapter 7: Excerpt from *The Big Apple* by Michael

Chapter 7: The Scariest Day of My Life

My cell phone rang at around 7:30AM, and woke me up. It was my Mom. She asked me what time I was going to be leaving the city. I told her that I was planning on leaving at 8:30 but that I might take the 10:30 Peter Pan bus instead because I was really tired from the night before. But she put up immediate resistance to my suggestion that I would leave later than originally scheduled and she said, "Michael, I want you to get up and get out of the city. You've had your fun, now I want you to go back to school and get into the school mode." I was groggling in bed and rolling around with that half asleep/half awake smile on my face and I said into the phone, "We'll see." She said, "Michael!!!" In a half serious/half kidding tone, "come on now, its time to get out of bed." And then I said, "We'll see…" again, and "I love you" and I told her that I would call her back. Then I fell back asleep and as I was sleeping the television was reporting on the plane that had crashed into the World Trade Center tower. And since the television was left on from the night before, my ears were hearing the TV's audio and the reality

that was unfolding in NYC that morning began incorporating itself into my dream; so I was having a nightmare about a plane crashing into the World Trade Center towers.

My cell phone rang again and it was my Mom. She was very assertive saying, "Michael, listen you need to get up immediately. The World Trade Center has been attacked." I was first thinking that it was part of my dream and still half waking up I said something to my mother along the lines of, "No, Mom. That is what I'm dreaming. That's not really happening." Then I looked at the TV and realized it was real and said, "OK, I'm going to get up and I'll call you when I get out." I got my stuff and headed downstairs as fast as I could and then handed in my key to the front desk; all the while not really sure about what was going on. I walked outside to get a cab and my phone rang again as I was trying to flag down a cab. I was trying to piece together what was happening and I was scared about the prospect of not being able to flag down a cab and get out of the city fast enough. I was already instinctually beginning to feel that this was really bad, with all of these thoughts running through my mind.

It was all hitting me and it was scary. Then my phone rang again and it was my Mom and she was almost frantic saying, "Michael, the second building was just hit. You need to get out of the city immediately!" I was dismissing her words and denying it psychologically and rationally and logically and saying, "No, Mom. There is no way both of them were hit. You're confused and you must have heard it wrong." Then I said, "OK, Mom. I'm trying to flag down a cab now. I'll call you back." And my cell phone's service ran out.

I got into a cab. The driver was an ethnic man. I believe Latin of some sort and I told him that I was going to the port authority and then I leaned over and said, "Did you

hear that the World Trade Center tower was just hit by an airplane and apparently the second one was just hit too?"

He said, "Really?" and sounded shocked and said, "Oh. Today is the mayor elections. Maybe that's what it is…I heard something about that." And then we stopped dead in our tracks as we looked up at the big jumbo screen in Times Square and the cab driver next to us pulled over too and said to my cab driver, "Do you believe this?" We all just looked up at the screen like we were looking at Godzilla and I couldn't believe my eyes.

Finally he dropped me off at the port authority and I hurriedly went inside to check in and I realized that I wasn't going anywhere. I asked where I could go for my bus but they were closing up and it became apparent that no one was going anywhere. I remember them pulling down those metal gates like the kind in mall shops. It was like the walls were closing in on me. I walked up the stairs and stopped at one of the small televisions where people were all looking. I couldn't believe it. I couldn't believe what my eyes were looking at. It was surreal. I asked the man next to me if he thought that it was an accident. He said, "Maybe if it was just one, but there is no way that two planes could accidentally crash into them." Then it all hit me. I walked outside and lost it. I have never been more afraid in my life.

The reality of the moment all hit me at once, in that one moment, like a ton of bricks. It was like waking up from a bad nightmare with sweat pouring down your forehead but this was real and was no nightmare. I had bitten the forbidden fruit of temptation and went in NYC (The Big Apple) against my parents will and against good logic and went to the concert and now just like Adam in the Garden of Eden I was naked.

I fell into temptation and now I was naked in the biggest city in the world and it was being attacked. I had nowhere to go. I was alone. I tried calling my Dad and my Mom on my cell phone, but it wouldn't work. I would find out later that it was because the towers controlled the service of the cell phones. No one had cell phone service.

I walked down the street and began to lose it mentally. I walked into a local pharmacy and stayed there in the front of the store in a little hallway not officially in the store. I was trying to gather my thoughts and regroup. It was all hitting me at once and I was overwhelmed. I was thinking that I could ask if the store clerk had a phone, but I was paralyzed by the moment. It didn't make sense. What was going on? One moment I'm at a Michael Jackson concert living out my dream come true and the next day the world goes to hell. It was too much to handle.

I kept calling my Mom and my Dad numerous times but my cell phone wouldn't work. So I got out of the store and went back to the port authority and the atmosphere was just crazy. There was a mob scene in front of it, and everyone was panicking and frightened and I started talking to these two ladies because I couldn't control myself. I asked, "Do you think we are going to get bombed? Do you think we are going to get nuked?"

This one black lady and this other lady were talking and talking to me and saying, "There's no use panicking. There is nothing we can do." I just kept trying to be positive and reassure myself, "like you don't think it would happen, do you?" But what she said wasn't comforting in that there is no use panicking but I couldn't help it and I think she even gave me a hug, but I was making her nervous. She was a little annoyed at me because I was so nervous and anxious and then I decided that I couldn't stand there any

longer and I had to walk. So I walked down the street and I asked some guy if I could use his phone and he said yes and I tried calling but it didn't work but I thanked him nonetheless and I watched some young guys roll by in a good car (either a Mercedes Benz or a BMW) while pumping rap music like they didn't even care that it was the end of the world.

I went into some Irish bar and saw men just drinking and smoking – being afraid and nervous and panicky and it just made me get even worse. I remember watching on the television screen them saying that a plane had crashed in Pennsylvania, the Pentagon was just hit, and then they showed the towers collapsing and I remember never being so scared in my entire life. Looking at the enormous cloud of smoke that covered Manhattan and thinking, "This is it. This is the end of the world." It looked so bad. It didn't even make sense in my mind…like things couldn't be this bad. There had to be some regulations. Some restrictions… How could this happen? How could we let people do this?

I remember just thinking this is the end of the world, Armageddon. Then they showed pictures of people in some far away land: Arabic people cheering and I was just a mess. I walked outside because I couldn't take it and walked down the street a little bit further to where a group of people had gathered around a radio that was on top of a cab. Some guy on the radio said that the spiritual leader of the Arabic world had said in response to the day's events that, "America is reaping what it sowed. It should be more careful as to how it treats other countries around the world." That was the icing on the cake.

All of my worst fantasies and nightmares bombarded my mind. I assumed all of the worst. I thought that all of the countries around the world had planned this day for a long time and that they were going to take over the U.S. in one day, and they were going to crash planes into all of the major cities and landmarks in the U.S. (as it appeared as that was what they were doing) to make everyone and everything result in chaos and then hit us with a nuclear weapon. I didn't know what was going on. I asked some older man who was wearing a business suit and looked distraught if he thought it was going to get worse and he said that he thought that the worst was over and that no more attacks would happen today, and that gave me a little reassurance because he seemed like an intelligent man. I just started crying and told him that all I wanted to do was see my family and I cried and said a little prayer and did the cross on my forehead. He said that I would be O.K. and that I would see my family and that he hoped everything worked out for me.

APPENDIX A

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY

Dear Student,

I am writing to invite you to participate in the study I am conducting for my dissertation research. The research involves investigating the transformative possibilities of writing in college composition. I am looking for students from our College Writing course who feel that the writing they did during the class impacted them in some way. Participation in the study will consist of two individual interviews. Your participation in the study will remain confidential, and you may withdraw from the study at any time.

If you are interested in participating in the study or if you have any questions, please contact me at mparanto@educ.umass.edu.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Michelle Paranto

APPENDIX B

THE WRITING PROGRAM SYLLABUS FOR COLLEGE WRITING

English 112: College Writing

College Writing is based on the belief that writing is a process. In order to grow and develop as writers we need to write, write, write and then write some more. We become "better" writers only by writing consistently and by engaging in all the steps of the writing process – drafting, revising, responding, reflecting, copy-editing and publishing. So in this class, this is what you can expect to do – write a lot and work your way through all the steps of the writing process. Below you will find the aims, requirements and structure of College Writing. Please be sure to read carefully. We will discuss the syllabus in class as well as refer to it throughout the semester.

Three central assumptions define College Writing:

- In this class we are all considered writers. We all have unique experiences and interesting insights that are worth writing about.
- We all learn and improve by doing: by writing to pursue our interests, by experimenting with new strategies, by having a receptive audience, by receiving feedback from others and by reflecting on our own work.
- To improve as writers and as learners, we all need a respectful and supportive classroom community. Creating a community that enables us to grow and develop as writers depends on each of us fulfilling our individual responsibilities, offering mutual respect to one another and being receptive readers of one another's writing.

Because we all learn to write best by writing and having a receptive audience, class sessions will be run as workshops rather than as lectures. It is therefore essential that you attend class consistently. In class you will experiment with new writing strategies; share your writing in pairs, small groups, and even with the whole class; and give responses to one another's writing. Final drafts will be published regularly in class magazines.

Goals and Rationale

The goal of this course is to help you develop your writing abilities – not only for University writing assignments but also for using writing effectively in the rest of your life. We will work together to improve your ability to

- write for various audiences and purposes – for example, to explore a topic for yourself, to communicate with others (fellow students, teachers, general readers, etc.), and to create particular effects (persuading, explaining, etc.).
- develop and extend your own thinking by questioning your own views and considering the views of others – thus becoming better able to write essays that move through an extended train of thinking rather than just defend a static position.

- use various kinds of thinking and discourses – for example, narrating, explaining, analyzing, interpreting, persuading, and arguing.
- draw on various sources of thinking and information: your own experience and observations, conversation with others and reading.
- revise your writing in a substantive way by means of re-thinking and re-seeing, and also by means of experimenting with various forms and organizations.
- be a constructive reader of your own and others' writing and give constructive and helpful feedback.
- understand and manage your own writing processes.
- take whatever steps are needed to copy-edit your final drafts successfully.

Required Texts

- Curtis, Marcia, et al., eds. *The Original Text-Wrestling Book*. Dubuque: Kendall/Hunt, 2001.
- Lunsford, Andrea. *The Everyday Writer*. NY: St. Martin's, 2001.
- A college edition of a standard desk dictionary.
- Class Magazines. Several times during the semester everyone's essays will be published in a booklet form for the class to read.

Required Writing

1. Five essays (each at least 750 to 1,000 words). With each finished essay, you must turn in all preliminary drafts, as well as any written responses.
2. Process writing.
3. Journal writing.
4. Other shorter assignments written in and out of class.

You will be doing a wide range of writing that will include the following major essays:

Introductory Essay
This will be in the form of a personal narrative that will serve to introduce you to members of the class. We will be doing writing prompts in class as a way to generate material for this piece.

Text-Wrestling Essay
For this essay we will read two texts from *The Original Text-Wrestling Book*. The book's "Introduction" will provide you with more specific details about the essay you will write, but briefly the goal for this essay is to practice reading closely and carefully and to engage with the ideas and thinking presented in the text. You will be asked to do two things in your essay – to represent the other writers' ideas fairly and fully as well as to respond with ideas of your own. There are many ways to engage a text, and the "Preparatory Exercises" section of the book will provide you with a variety of ways to begin the text-wrestling process.

Topic To Be Announced Essay
We will go over the guidelines for this essay unit more specifically later in the semester.

The Documented Essay
In this essay, you will be asked to advance your thinking about a topic that interests you by entering into a dialogue with published writes who have written about it. The goal is not so much to summarize what others have written but rather to use their thinking to help you work out your thinking. Don't think of this as a "gathering-and presenting-information" essay, but rather a chance for you to figure something out and support it with outside sources. A secondary aim for the documented essay is to gain more facility using a standard form of academic documentation.

The Case Study Review
For the final essay you will be asked to review all the writing you have done this semester. This is a chance for you to reflect on the development and progress that you have made over the course of the semester. In many ways, writing is about choices and this is your opportunity to reflect, articulate and evaluate the choices you have made in your work. This is also an opportunity for you to take stock of yourself as a writer, to evaluate where you have been and where you are going. This is not just a report of the work you have done this semester, but rather it is a developed essay working out a hypothesis and developing a train of thought about your writing and yourself as a writer. A part of the process of developing this essay will be the review of a classmate's portfolio. This is your chance to get valuable feedback on the body of your work as well as to gain experience reviewing the work of another.

Drafts and the Writing Process
Sometimes people write papers all in one draft – sometimes even the night before the deadline. Sometimes this process can produce acceptable writing. Nevertheless, a central aim of this course is to teach you a longer and more thoughtful writing process that invites more development and evolution in your thinking. You will write multiple drafts for each essay. Each draft will have a specific purpose leading you to the final draft of your piece. You might do well to think of different "drafts" as different "stages" of a paper. Each stage is a step in the writing process. As you work from one draft to the next, you will have the chance to assess it yourself and to receive feedback from your classmates and from me. It is important to keep in mind the difference between revision and editing. Revision means making substantive changes; it entails a re-seeing or re-thinking of the entire piece. Editing means correcting, touching up.

The following is a brief explanation of the drafting cycle we will use throughout the semester.

Exploratory Draft. In an exploratory draft you get down on paper all the ideas and information that come to mind. Here you can try out different approaches – even on the same paper. Don't be concerned with organization or how the draft will work for readers, but do be concerned with opening up your thinking, exploring possibilities, and getting down lots of writing that you can work with.

Mid-process Draft. Since your first draft was an exploratory attempt to get down as much thinking as possible, now is the time to work on organizing, adding and cutting sections, and other kinds of rewriting. You will be trying to think about your readers, focus your purpose, clarify your thinking, and convey a particular point of view and tone of voice. But even a mid-process draft can benefit from remaining a bit unsettled – from having a bit too much in it – so that when you do a final revision, you still have some choice of direction or emphasis.

Concluding Revision Draft. This is your chance to make substantive changes again after getting feedback from your readers. This is also the stage where you focus on copy-editing – removing all remaining mistakes in spelling, grammar, or punctuation. It is fine to get help in copy-editing – indeed it is desirable to do so – from the handbook, from a dictionary, from friends, and even from a paid typist or editor. You need to learn to take whatever steps are necessary for successful copy-editing, because your final draft will not be acceptable if mistakes remain.

Final/Publication Draft. This is your final draft that will be published in our class magazine. It should be error free and formatted for publication. When you submit your final draft, always include all preliminary work: all notes, drafts, process writing, responses – everything. Drafts are not acceptable without this supplementary material.

The Course Calendar lists the due dates for these drafts. All are due at the beginning of class.

Formatting
Normally all drafts should

- be labeled with the date and the number of the draft;
- contain page numbers;
- be double-spaced;
- be stapled.

However, in our attempt to cut down on photocopying costs and to save trees; the

Final/Publication draft should

- be single-spaced, leaving an extra line between paragraphs;
- have one inch margins;
- be in 10 point font;
- be paper-clipped;
- have page numbers removed.

Your Journal
Your journal is for informal, personal writing and reflection. The purpose of the journal is for you to write regularly, experiment with your writing, and develop a writer's habit of observing, reflecting, and playing with language. You will need to write for at least one hour a week – at least three to four pages. Your journal will be checked periodically.

Your Portfolio
Don't throw anything away! As you move throughout the semester, you will be creating a portfolio of all your written work. The portfolio will include the major essays, all the drafts and preliminary work that accompany the final draft, process writing, the additional in-class and out-of-class writing exercises we do, and the written feedback from your readers. You will need a big folder and/or an accordion-type file.

Conferences and Office Hours
At least twice during the semester, we will schedule individual conferences. This is a time for us to discuss your writing more fully and your progress in the course. I also encourage you to come in during my office hours.

Final Conferences
A third conference will be scheduled during final examination week. This is a chance for us to meet in order to go over your portfolio and discuss the progress you made during the semester. **Final conferences are mandatory so be sure to account for them when making your plans for the end of the semester.**

Policy on Acknowledgments
It is fine to use ideas, words, and short passages from the writings of others in your writing, *as long as you acknowledge the source*. Failure to acknowledge the contribution of others is considered plagiarism, a serious academic offense. It is also a good idea, though not obligatory, to acknowledge advice you receive from others that you use in revising your drafts or in copy-editing. You will find a copy of the Writing Program's "About Plagiarism" handout in the back of *The Original Text-Wrestling Book. The Everyday Writer* also contains a detailed explanation about plagiarism. We will go over this more extensively throughout the course.

Attendance and Absence Policy
Regular attendance and preparation for class are basic expectations of the course. To put it bluntly, the class does not work unless everyone is here, on time and prepared. Still, you are allowed one week's worth of class absences during the semester, no questions asked. Save them for the occasional emergency and illness. Aside from exceptional circumstances, being sick does not entitle you to an extra absence. Since when you miss class you also miss activities essential to the writing process, each absence beyond the allowed week will affect your final grade.

APPENDIX C

THE COLLEGE WRITING SYLLABUS USED BY PARTICIPANTS

English 112: College Writing

Course Philosophy

We are all writers. We all have unique experiences and insights that are worth writing about and sharing with others. To improve as writers, we need to create a respectful and supportive classroom community. Creating that community depends on each of us fulfilling our individual responsibilities, offering mutual respect to one another and being invested readers and receptive listeners. Class sessions will be run as workshops rather than as lectures. These workshops will be the foundation of our writing community, which will support your growth as a writer. In class you will be writing and sharing your work in pairs, small groups and with the whole class. It is therefore essential that you attend class and come fully prepared and ready to participate.

Course Goal and Methods

The goal of this course is to help you develop your writing abilities for academic writing assignments as well as for using writing effectively in the rest of your life. To improve your writing ability you will:

- write for various audiences and purposes;
- develop your own thinking by questioning your views and the views of others;
- draw on multiple sources of information to enhance your writing;
- revise your writing in a substantive way by means of re-thinking and re-seeing;
- learn how to copy-edit your writing successfully;
- be a constructive reader of your own and others' writing;
- give constructive and helpful feedback;
- understand and manage your own writing processes.

Required Writing

1. Five essays of 750 to 1,500 words each (3-5, typed pages)
2. Journal writing
3. Freewriting and other in class writing assignments

Required Texts

Curtis, Marcia, et al. eds. The Original Text-Wrestling Book. Dubuque: Kendall/Hunt, 2001.

Lunsford, Andrea. The Everyday Writer. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2001.

Drafts and the Writing Process

A central aim of this course is to teach you a thoughtful writing process that invites more development and evolution in your thinking. You will be required to write multiple drafts for each essay. This process will permit you to be more exploratory and adventuresome in early drafts and more disciplined in later drafts. As you work from one draft to the next, you'll have the chance to assess your own writing and also receive

feedback from your peers. I will be giving you written and oral feedback on at least one draft of each essay. In this class revision involves making substantive changes not simply making minor corrections. It may be helpful to think of different "drafts" as different "versions" of a paper. With each finished essay, you must turn in all drafts as well as any written peer and teacher feedback. The drafts are as follows:

Exploratory Draft
An exploratory draft involves getting down on paper all the ideas and information that you can think of about a subject. The writing concern here is to open up your thinking, explore possibilities, brainstorm and get it all down on paper.

Mid-process Draft
This is the draft to work on organizing your thoughts and ideas into an essay. Start thinking about audience, focusing your purpose, clarifying your thinking and conveying a particular point of view and tone of voice.

Revised Draft
This is your chance to make significant changes to your essay after getting feedback from your peers and me. Since this is your last draft except for copy-editing, you need to work on crafting the wording, style and voice.

Final Draft
Your only job with this draft is to copy-edit well: to remove all remaining mistakes in spelling, grammar and punctuation. It is fine to get help in copy-editing, indeed it is desirable to do so: from the handbook, a dictionary, friends and The Writing Center. You need to learn to take whatever steps are necessary for successful copy-editing because your final draft will not be acceptable if there are still mistakes.

Formatting
- Type, double-space and staple all drafts.
- Label each draft with your name, title of the essay and the name of the draft.
- Number all pages.

Your Journal
Your journal is for informal writing and reflection in and out of class. Please bring it to each class so that you may use it for freewriting exercises and journal prompts. You must write five pages a week (250 words per page) for a total of 70 pages minimum at the end of the semester. I will be checking the journals throughout the semester to insure that you are writing consistently, but I will not be reading them for content. Your journal is your private space to write. The only expectation is that you write 5 pages a week for the entire semester.

Your Portfolio
As we work through the semester, you will be creating a portfolio of all your written work. DO NOT THROW ANYTHING AWAY! The portfolio will include your five essays, all drafts and preliminary work, process writing, all in-class and out-of-class

writing and all feedback you receive on your writing. Everything you write during the semester for this class must go into your portfolio. You may organize this in any way you want, but make sure that it's all there at the end of the semester so that you may write a comprehensive Portfolio Review and Assessment.

Conferences
Several times during the semester we will have individual and group conferences. These conferences are a time to discuss your writing more fully one-on-one and in small groups. Our last conference will be scheduled during final examinations week. The final conference is an opportunity for us to go over your portfolio and to discuss the progress you made during the semester. All conferences are mandatory. Conferences count as one week of class attendance. If you miss your scheduled conference, it will count as two absences.

Policy on Acknowledgements
It is fine to use ideas, words and short passages from the writings of others in your writing, as long as you acknowledge the source. Failure to acknowledge the contribution of others is considered plagiarism, a serious academic offense. If you have any questions about this, please come and see me.

Attendance and Absence Policy
Attendance and preparation for class are basic expectations of the course. The class does not work unless everyone is here, on time and prepared. **You are allowed two absences during the semester, excused or unexcused.** Each absence beyond these two will lower your final grade one half a letter grade. No exceptions. Coming to class late, unprepared or without the work that is due will also lower your final grade.

Late Work
I do not accept late work under any circumstances. If you need to miss a class on the day something is due, please have a classmate bring your work to class or contact me to make arrangements. No exceptions.

Grading
Your final grade for this class will be based on the accumulation of your work from the semester. You will not receive grades on individual essays. At the end of the semester, you will write a portfolio review and assessment and give yourself a final grade based on your performance in the course. Below are the percentages each component of the class is worth. If at any time you would like to discuss your progress in the course, please come see me. This approach is intended to de-emphasize grades so that you may focus on your writing and improving your writing.

Portfolio	70%
Journal	15%
Class Participation/Attendance	15%

Semester Calendar

Week 1	Tuesday, Sept. 5	Introductions/Expectations
Week 2 (Journal 10)	Tuesday, Sept. 10	DUE: Autobiography Exploratory
	Thursday, Sept. 12	DUE: Autobiography Mid-process D *Read "The Mountain" Eli Clare (71)*
Week 3 (15)	**NO CLASS – Conferences**	
Week 4 (20)	Tuesday, Sept. 24	DUE: Autobiography Revised
	Thursday, Sept. 26	DUE: Autobiography Final *Bring Text-Wrestling Book to class*
Week 5 (25)	Tuesday, Oct. 1	DUE: Text-Wrestling Exploratory
	Thursday, Oct. 3	DUE: Text-Wrestling Mid-process
Week 6 (30)	**NO CLASS – Conferences**	
Week 7 (35)	Tuesday, Oct. 15	DUE: Text-Wrestling Revised
	Thursday, Oct. 17	DUE: Text-Wrestling Final
Week 8 (40)	Tuesday, Oct. 22	DUE: Inquiry Project Proposal
	Thursday, Oct. 24	Library Visit
Week 9 (45)	Tuesday, Oct. 29	DUE: Research Report
	Thursday, Oct. 31	DUE: Inquiry Project Exploratory
Week 10 (50)	Tuesday, Nov. 5	Second Library Visit
	Thursday, Nov. 7	DUE: Inquiry Project Mid-process
Week 11 (55)	**NO CLASS – Conferences**	
Week 12 (60)	Tuesday, Nov. 19	DUE: Inquiry Project Revised
	Thursday, Nov. 21	DUE: Inquiry Project Final
Week 13 (65)	Tuesday, Nov. 26	DUE: Experimental Exploratory *Read "How to Tame" Anzaldua (20)*
	Thursday, Nov. 28	NO CLASS
Week 14 (70)	Tuesday, Dec. 3	DUE: Experimental Mid-process
	Thursday, Dec. 5	DUE: Experimental Revised
Week 15	Tuesday, Dec. 10	DUE: Experimental Final
	Thursday, Dec. 12	Portfolio Review Workshop
Final Exam Period	Final Conferences	**DUE: Portfolio Assessment**

APPENDIX D

INFORMATION FORM FILLED OUT BY PARTICIPANTS

CONTACT INFORMATION **Date:** _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____

_____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Age: _____

Race: _____

Ethnicity: _____

Social Class: _____

Where did you grow up? _____

Year in college when you took College Writing? _____

Year in college at time of interviews? _____

What is your major/minor? _____

Do you want a pseudonym to be used for your name in the study? _____

APPENDIX E

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

Dear Student:

Thank you for your interest in participating in this study. In order to proceed with the research, you must give your informed consent. This research will investigate the transformative possibilities of writing in college composition. I will be using the data from this study primarily for my doctoral dissertation. I may also present the data at professional conferences and publish it in articles and books. My goal for this study is to better understand your experience of the writing you did during your College Writing course. The results from this study will enable me to be a better teacher as well as inform the field of college composition, so writing programs and teachers may better serve the needs of college and university students.

Your involvement in this study will include participating in two audiotaped individual interviews. The interviews will ask you to share your ideas and insights about your College Writing experience pertaining to transformative writing. I am also asking your permission to include excerpts from your writing in my dissertation as well as in any presentations and publications that may come from this study. I will be the only person with access to the audiotapes of your interviews. If you are interested, you may listen to your individual interviews.

I will change the identity of the school and all participants in the study in any written texts or presentations to protect your anonymity and insure your privacy. If you would like to be identified in the study, your name will be used. You may withdraw from the study at any time.

You are also welcome to contact me at anytime to discuss the study. When the study is completed, a report of the research findings will be available at your request. I will consider your feedback in the writing of the study, and it may be included in the dissertation.

If you would like to participate in the study, please sign the attached consent form and return it to me. If you have any questions about the study, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Michelle Paranto
Language, Literacy and Culture Program
School of Education
University of Massachusetts Amherst
mparanto@educ.umass.edu

Writing and Transformation in College Composition
Consent for Voluntary Participation

I volunteer to participate in this qualitative study and understand that:

1. Michelle Paranto will interview me using an open-ended interview format.

2. The questions I will be asked will address my experience in College Writing. I understand the primary purpose of this research is to investigate the transformative possibilities of writing in college composition.

3. The interviews and discussion session will be audiotaped to facilitate analysis of the data.

4. I will not be identified in the study in any way unless I want to be.

5. I may review the data prior to the completion of the study.

6. I understand that excerpts from my interviews and from my College Writing portfolio may be included in Michelle Paranto's doctoral dissertation and may also be included in manuscripts submitted for publication and in presentations at professional conferences.

_____ _____

Participant's Signature Date

_____ _____

Researcher's Signature Date

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